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And thus the Bishop found us
(page 400)

THE HIDDEN EMPIRE

*A Tale of True Deeds and Great Ones
which the Tropic Sun witnessed*

By

R. W. FENN

With Illustrations by
M. LEONE BRACKER



L.C.

NEW YORK
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TO MY FRIEND
LUTHER S. LIVINGSTON
IN MEMORY OF MANY HAPPY DAYS TOGETHER
BESIDE THE MAGDALENA

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CHAPTER I

CASSOCK OR SWORD

I DO as well remember the first time mine eyes fell upon the little lady Beatriz de la Torre, even now after so many long years, as though it were but yesterday. I, Gonzálo de Cabrera, now gentleman and knight, but passing my boyhood then under the care of mine uncle, the Dean of the Cathedral at Tenerife, and under the tutelage of the monks, destined to the cowl or the cassock,—what had I to do with the little niece of the Governor of the Canaries, Don Pedro Fernández de Lugo?

Nevertheless, mine uncle was a studious man and so much engrossed with other matters that I ran wild the Island over whenever I was free from the monks during my recreation hours, or when I could escape their dreary instruction by the lightness of my feet in some moment of inadvertence. Little I recked of the caning for the joys of liberty which were mine.

On this great day of my life,—the day sacred to Beatriz,—the waters of the Bay, placid under the warm rays of our Island sun and tinted with blue of our Island sky, allured my truant steps with witching suasion to the pebbled beach and to the boats which I could see drawn up within the shadow of the great broken masses of lava piled along the shore on each side of the quays. Almost I had yielded to their solicitation and turned my face that way. Yet, for my fate and fortune, mine eyes went

vagrant toward the forest line beyond the vineyards that skirted the great sentinel peak of our little sea-girt province. Chance is a word invented by fools! For this time and occasion the sea must wait. Mine excursion should be inland and away from the Ocean sea.

Accordingly, I found myself presently seated upon the low out-spreading limbs of a gnarled and twisted tree, overhanging the edge of the road between the town and the Castle, engaged in peering as well as I might at the vital organs of four young birds as displayed through their gaping throats.

Why they should take a marauder like myself for their parent or their providence and stretch their ugly necks for food, I know not nor had long to consider, for, through the curtain of green leaves which veiled my criminal intentions, I presently espied a point of red approaching along the highway.

There were other eyes as quick as mine, however, and they belonged to Master Joaquin Gómez' great black bull, who had been grazing at one side of the road and who liked it not that that ill-omened bit of crimson wool should come to make his vision dance and his brain seethe.

As I looked, the point of red, which was naught else than little Doña Beatriz' flame-coloured kirtle, began to move more rapidly, ever approaching, as her flying feet carried her in advance of the danger to which she was now alert. Right swiftly did her little feet carry the maid toward me, but the splendid black beast behind was urged on by his fierce resentment to an even more rapid pace, and for a time it seemed that there was to be no escape for the little lady.



Yet ought I, a stout lad in search of adventures, to leave a lady to perish unaided? Accordingly, I was preparing to drop to the ground and try the doubtful policy of beating back the enemy with stones, when another and a better thought came to my mind. Bracing my body in the fork of the branch, I swung my head and shoulders downward and, with arms and voice, beckoned and called to the flying child.

She saw and turned toward me in desperation, with the bull lumbering close at her heels. As she reached me, I caught her outstretched wrists and, putting forth all my strength, drew her up from her peril. Great was the strain, indeed, and, as she swung into the air, her little heels marked two lines on the sweaty hump of the angry animal plunging past beneath us, at the exact spot where the *matador's* toledo was to enter and pierce his lungs that same year in the Plaza de Toros.

Little by little, I drew her to a place beside me on the limb, whilst the astonished animal below looked about in vain for his prey, and sniffed and snorted and peered with his bloodshot eyes at every bush and bunch of grass until he forgot what he was seeking and why he was angry, and commenced to crop the herbage which, but a moment before, he had suspected of being in the league against him.

With that sweet dignity which always distinguished her amongst women, notable even at eleven years, the little maid turned to me and said:

"You are brave and strong. You will be a loyal knight some day. But why are you bare of foot?"

I hid my naked feet in shame and, even then, I noticed that, although she was flushed and breathing hard, neither the voice that spoke nor the hand that

rested on mine trembled the slightest, although mine own were all in a flutter. I could see that by some subtle instinct she had divined that I was not of the peasantry and had, in her childish fashion, wondered at the feet that I had left bare to escape the more stealthily from my hated lessons.

So I told her all, and she smiled as though not displeased.

"We are companions in iniquity," she commented, demurely; "I, also, have escaped from thralldom. But I fear that I must return. You may let me down to the ground now by the same ladder by which I ascended. The enemy has drawn off his forces."

I clasped her little hands in my strong, rough palms and lowered her gently to the ground, dropping beside her a moment later, quite forgetful of what had led me into the tree. She allowed me to accompany her to a turn of the road beyond which the Castle was in full view, and then I left her at her earnest request.

"I thank you, sir," she said, with quaint dignity, "and I would not have you beaten by the guard at the gate, so you may kiss my hand and leave me here."

I did as she bade me and went home to my caning, well-satisfied,—having but little heart for further bird's-nesting. As for the caning, 'twas only of an ordinary mark and not such an one as I received the day that I painted huge mustachios with oil and soot upon the faces of the heavenly host in the chancel.

The armourer of his Excellency the Governor, Master Juan de Dios Reyes, was my staunch and worthy friend, and it was to him that I was indebted

for the breadth of chest and firmness of muscle to which Doña Beatriz owed her life that day; for the good smith had not only beguiled many an hour of mine with tales of the Moorish wars, but had given me some little instruction in the care and use of arms and armour and in the handling of the blade as well.

"By'r Lady!" he was wont to say, "thou hast but little of the priest in thy makeup, and God grant they may not come to spoil a good sword-arm to gain a sprinkler of holy water."

From him I had known of the Governor's niece, the little lady Beatriz, and by him I had been once introduced into the Castle, but our lord of the Island was a stern and jealous warrior and the times were troublous. The discipline was exact and severe, and hundreds of men-at-arms and arquebuziers were at all times quartered within the grim fortress: for our Island boasted of her abundant provender for man and beast, and was famed afar because of it. In time of war the Governor sailed with four or five thousand of his vassals, victualled and armed at his own expense in the most approved fashion.

Owing to his trade of smith, combined with that of armourer to his Excellency the Governor, Juan de Dios dwelt by the roadside without the Castle, where he might shape a shoe or clinch a nail for the chance traveller or do an odd job for a passing carter, and here, at his forgeside, I took my first lessons in the trade of arms.

To my destined calling I was not at the time averse. To mine own knowledge, the reverend fathers of mine acquaintance lived well and easily and, to my boyish understanding, there seemed no reason why I might not do the same. With the martial

aspirations awakened in my breast by the good armourer came my first vague doubts, but my worthy friend made light of the matter and called to my mind scores of sturdy priests whose knees had made the ribs of their chargers crack and whose good swords had hewed the way to glory and to fame.

"Such a priest will I be," was my thought, and thus I was for the moment content.

After mine adventure, which I have above related, boy as I was, my head was filled with Doña Beatriz, and my hands and lips still in fancy felt the pressure of her soft skin. Yet was I not like to see her soon, for it was scarce probable that she would again escape from her *dueña* and the guards, to run most perilously at large upon the public highway, nor was it likely that I should see her in the Castle.

As it fell about, during the next two years or so, I saw her twice or thrice in the Cathedral and once at some formal pageant of the Governor. Each time, by some slight token, my loyal lady showed that she had not forgotten, and at last Juan de Dios came to mine aid.

As I entered the smithy one day, dressed by chance in holiday attire, I found the good fellow armed cap-a-pie and putting a last polish on some part of his armour which seemed to his careful eye to lack lustre.

"Wouldst see the young lord receive his first blade to-day, my lad?" he cried, in his big hearty voice. "As thou art in holiday array, thou mayst accompany me to the ceremony, an thou wilt. The blade is mine own making. May the young man prove of equal temper and not bring dishonour on the smith and on his own blood!"

Methought a shade of doubt crept into his voice as he spoke, but the old retainer was too loyal to say more, and I cut him short myself with many enquiries in regard to the occasion, for I had already got some wind of the business and had accidentally decked myself with my finest and casually, by chance, without premeditation, as it were, drifted toward the smithy to fence for an opening or, in other words, to fish for an invitation.

"'Tis but a *fiesta* in honour of the lad's sixteenth anniversary, and to-day he receives his sword and spurs from the Governor. He can find a use for them soon enough, I warrant, for the Governor gives but little rest to his followers. A better horseman than the lad is not to be found amongst them all, and he is not to be despised in the handling of the blade. But come, let us be off!"

I followed my friend to the Castle gates, about which a throng of men-at-arms was gathered, whose every appointment denoted the sternest discipline. Rough-looking fellows they were, indeed, and scarred and weather-beaten. They had already won renown on many a hard-fought field with the Moors—those soldiers of Old Spain—and were to trample on all Europe in days soon to come and win glory by unexampled deeds beyond the unknown western seas, as I myself was to witness. Juan de Dios quickly crossed the drawbridge, shouldered me past the guard, standing sponsor for me, and entered the precincts of the Castle.

As soon as we were come into the great court, a scene of gaiety and mirth appeared before us. The many detached buildings of which the Castle was composed were ablaze with banners, gorgeous cloth-

of-gold, and coloured streamers. Here all the trophies taken from the Moor found occasion for display, while in the centre of the court a number of oxen were roasting whole over great fires, and numerous wine casks stood about in readiness for the feast to come. At one side of the court there was arranged a place for the jousts and trials of strength and skill, and beside it a great platform covered with banners, rugs, and tapestry, with seats for those of rank and for the judges of the games.

"Dost see yon crimson canopy, lad?" asked my companion, nudging mine elbow and pointing to the last.

"Ay," I replied, "and what may it be?"

"Why,—if thou wouldst know,—'tis there I am to sit with Gaspar de Santa Fé, the Master-at-arms, and judge the games. The casting vote lieth with the Governor. Over yonder, 'neath the cloth-of-gold, the principal guests and those of high lineage are to sit. Here below thou mayst take thy stand with the rabble, for thou art naught but a churchman;" and Juan de Dios laughed mischievously, slapping me on the shoulder with his heavy hand in ponderous playfulness.

As we strolled across the courtyard, the Governor was seen entering from the other side, followed by his son and those of high rank in the household, together with the guests of quality, and preceded by the heralds and pursuivants. A number of priests, amongst whom I noticed mine uncle the Dean, formed a part of the company, and the ladies made up the remainder. In a little moment mine eyes sought out the Lady Beatriz, and at the same instant hers rested upon me. She smiled and flashed a glo-

rious glance of recognition from her great dark eyes, all for me, and then passed on, but how my heart beat under my velvet doublet as I saw that she had not forgotten nor was too proud to recognise.

The contests were open to all comers, and many from the town were in the crowd, as well as hundreds of guests from a distance, with their retainers. Of what use to describe a scene so familiar to all! It was expected that the young lord would show his prowess in the arena before receiving his sword, and right gallantly he rode upon a coal-black charger and in most knightly fashion he unhorsed his opponent with his lance. It then became his knightly duty to defend his armour from all comers for the space of one turn of the glass, and to this effect the herald trumpeted and challenged all there present.

The lad took his place before the glittering heap and bared his shining blade. A handsome fellow he was, I will acknowledge, who learned to hate his treacherous face with a most cordial hatred; which sentiment he repaid in kind, with interest. The lad's black hair curled crisply on his snowy forehead; his proud figure, graceful and well-knit, assumed an arrogant position; his black eye flashed and his lip curled scornfully as he glanced about the field. In truth, he looked fierce enough to eat toads and lizards!

I looked then to see the challenge accepted, but looked in vain. I could see the Governor's face, flushed with pride, turned toward his son. Behind him sat Doña Beatriz, who did not look at her cousin Don Alonzo: something in her face appealed to me, I know not why; but I stepped forth from the crowd of spectators into the arena and flung my glove at

the young man's feet. A murmur ran about the multitude. Many there were that knew me, and I heard them laugh and say:

"Marry! 'Tis the young priest!"

This pricked my pride so that I drew myself up stiffly and exclaimed, "Loan me a blade of tried temper and I will undertake this affair!" A laugh ran through the crowd and back again, and died away in a titter.

"How now, varlet!" exclaimed the young noble, haughtily, "thou hast no sword and dost pretend to measure with me!" and he seemed to turn his back and look again for an opponent.

"Whose blade is thine?" I rejoined, with cool insolence, knowing that he heard me well for all that his back was half turned from me and that my giving him back his "thou" would stir his bile; "'tis but borrowed until thou canst prove thy worth."

At this he made as if he would have thrust at me, all unarmed as I was, but a mailed arm held him back, and at the same moment thrust a hilt into my hand.

"Here, take it, lad! Thou art playing the fool, but I like not to see thee spitted without means of defence. And ware thine opponent, for he hath had the most skilled masters both of Castile, Italy, and France. Thou hast the stronger wrist, and he the more supple trunk."

Don Alonzo had turned upon the armourer in white-hot anger at his act, "Dost thou lay thine arm upon me, rascal!" but the Governor held up his hand and signalled to the herald, who cried out:

"The challenger, Alonzo Luís de Lugo, doth ac-

cept the defiance of his adversary, Gonzálo de Cabrera, in that the gentle birth of his said adversary is duly attested."

I knew not then that mine uncle, the Dean, had leaned forward in his chair and whispered to the old Governor, whereat the latter had frowned darkly and meditated for a moment. Then had he called the herald and delivered to him his instruction, so that thus I found myself with naked sword opposed to his heir, looking into a face of disdain and anger out of mine own grey eyes, in which I am sure there was no great love burning.

Mine adversary did not wait for the attack, but pressed me sharply from the start. Well I knew, ere a moment had passed, that mine old friend had spoken wisely when he warned me of my danger. I was quick, but he was quicker, and once had he slashed my doublet and once had he pricked my shoulder. His it was to cry "first blood!" but he knew it not, for I shut my teeth and gave no sign. Then I touched him on his sword-arm and he changed to the other hand so quickly that 'twas scarce to be noticed. Now he had me at a dire disadvantage, but, to his evident surprise, I changed also to my left, for Juan de Dios had taught me this, and a murmur of astonishment and admiration ran about the multitude to see two lads thus matched, even as the ridicule had run before, and I could see the Governor and guests-of-honour leaning forward in eager interest, but I felt Don Alonzo press me hard in anger and kept myself upon my defence. Thus I prolonged the struggle until I had wearied him, when I pressed him closer at last and, by a sudden turn of my stronger wrist, I caught him short up upon his blade

and broke it at the hilt, leaving it useless in his hand.

In a violent rage, he stamped his foot and cast the fragment on the ground, gnashing with his teeth. Lowering my point, I waited whilst they brought him another. His face was black with evil passion as he snatched the weapon they brought him, but, at this moment, the Governor signalled and two halberdiers thrust their blades between us.

Don Pedro beckoned the judges to him and conferred with them for a moment, after which the herald announced that it was their honourable decision that Don Alonzo had most valiantly defended his own during the set time and was, therefore, in every way entitled to receive knighthood, but that at the same time his adversary had shown himself to be of equal temper and should have equal recognition, in the hope that, perchance, his ecclesiastical duties might not altogether prevent him from serving his King and liege with the sword.

Here had I gained distinction in a moment by my rashness, as well as one or more deadly enemies. One must take the bitter with the sweet, but I wished that all had been otherwise when Juan de Dios pressed my hand in the throng during the merry-making after the games and whispered in mine ear, "Thou art a valiant lad and hast made a good enemy for thyself and me." Then he pressed into my hand a small packet and left me.

I stood a space with the packet in my hand, wondering, but, as I brought it nearer to mine eyes, the scent of some dainty perfume such as women use came to my nostrils and, half divining the truth, I thrust it into my bosom and looked up to see Don Alonzo's

evil eye upon me. As he met my gaze, he scowled darkly and turned upon his heel.

I set but a poor price upon his enmity, and at a less figure would I have esteemed his friendship, also I was not one to remain long under a shadow when all were merry about me, so I took my part with those present who were of my rank and who saw no reason to decline my friendship. Dusk had fallen upon us ere the signal for closing the Castle gates called us from our wholesome revelry.

As I passed out the gates, methought I saw Don Alonzo in an angle of the wall with two men-at-arms, and, indeed, I passed so close to them that I caught a few words of suddenly hushed speech, to which for the moment I gave no heed, but they kept ringing in the ears of my memory until suddenly I took them into comprehension,—“the breast of his doublet!” The words brought to my recollection the breast of mine own doublet and that which I bore therein, but the time and the place were not fitting to satisfy my curiosity, so I pressed on the more rapidly toward the town.

For a space the road was filled with stragglers from the Castle, many of them as merry as the casks in the Castle yard were empty, and singing bits of ballad or drinking-song by the way. The night was somewhat dark by spells as a young moon drew behind the drifting clouds. Two horsemen passed me at a rapid pace, and soon disappeared in the distance. I was but a lad and unsuspecting of danger, but, as I distanced the merry stragglers, some idle fancy led me to draw my newly acquired sword and try its weight and temper as I walked. Then, as I held it in my hand and swung along upon my way at a goodly

gait, of a sudden there set upon me from out the shadows two dark and silent figures, one in front and one behind. At the same moment the moon came from out a bit of cloud and cast the warning shadow of mine assailant from behind. I turned and saw that his sword was in its sheath and in his hand a naked dagger. In an instant I ran him through the throat with my sword, and turned to catch the dagger of the other assassin in my shoulder.

'Twas my first real wound! For the first time the tender white skin opened 'neath the keen bite of the steel and sinews shrank apart before its well-ground edge. Ah! I can feel it yet, cut smoothly through flesh and gristle and bone, and then he drew it forth to smite again and a stream of warm blood drenched my body. My whole heart grew sick within me and waves of faintness and chill ran over my body. A deadly nausea seized me and a haze fell before mine eyes. Was this death? Well, dying, I would leave at least a mark upon the cowardly foe who struck from out the darkness!

It seemed to me hours that the hand of the assassin lingered to strike the blow, but, in truth, it was but the portion of a moment, and, ere it fell, I had seized him by the wrist and driven mine own dagger into his side. He laughed a cruel laugh as it rang upon mail, and the broken blade fell tinkling upon the ground, whilst my numbed hand fell back from it; but he laughed without cause for mirth. He took me for a lad, and knew not that mine arm had plied the heavy smith's hammer during many an idle hour through the last few years, and then I smote him between the eyes of his evil face with the broken poignard and left him lying there stunned, whilst I

leaned against a tree and drew my sword from his comrade's throat. I bethought me that these were the cavaliers who had passed at a gallop but a few moments before and that their horses must be nigh at hand. Peering into the darkness, I made out their dim forms at no great distance and heard, 'midst the buzzing in mine ears, the champing of their bits. Could I but pull myself into the saddle, I might hope to reach mine uncle's ere loss of blood should render me unconscious: but first I stooped over the dead and wounded and knew their evil faces as those of the men-at-arms who had been parleying with my young lord, Don Alonzo, at the gate of the Castle, and I remembered the words, "the breast of his doublet." So I knew him for evermore as the black-hearted scoundrel that he was and as the lover of his little cousin, Doña Beatriz.

It was Juan de Dios that told me afterwards how the Governor had determined that the cousins should be united as soon as the maid came of age, but as yet I did not know this.

Summoning all my strength, I reached the horses, and, turning one loose to find his way back to the Castle, I dragged myself upon the other and set off at an easy gallop to mine uncle's. It was then that I found that I had slipped the wounded man's dagger into mine own girdle, where it might well take the place of the broken one, and where it was to do me noble service more than once in the days to come.

Without great difficulty, I reached mine uncle's house, where I was at once put to bed and a leech summoned, who quickly staunched the blood and made me as comfortable as possible. I told my story

to the good Dean, referring not to the packet, which could be of no manner of interest to him, and whose contents I could not as yet divine.

He listened attentively and without comment, and, when I was done, said: "My son, thou hast played the part of a rash but valiant lad. I cannot say that I would have had thee do otherwise. Thou hast made a powerful and unscrupulous enemy, but thou art under the protection of the Governor to a certain extent. He does not bear thee good-will, but he will not see thee openly harmed if he can prevent it, because of ancient ties which bound thy family to his. Thou must lay aside thy sword and pass to the Continent with the first ship that sails after thou art properly mended and able to bear the fatigues of the journey, and there thou wilt complete thine education at Madrid. Thou art ready for thy first vows. It will be well to take them ere thou goest. I shall see that all is made ready."

"Worthy sir and well-beloved Uncle mine," I exclaimed, each breath cutting like a knife in my wounded shoulder, "I know now that I am of gentle birth. To-day I am become a man and a knight. Tell me of my father, I implore you!"

The Dean sat for a moment in silence and then murmured, half-inaudibly and with a touch of sadness, as it seemed to me: "Thy father was a cavalier and a soldier. Thy mother was an English lady of rank. I cannot tell thee more at present, Gonzálo."

"Then you are not my mother's brother, sir, as I supposed!" I cried, in astonishment.

"I loved thy mother, my son. She chose thy father. I took these priestly vows and, dying, she gave

me her infant boy as a legacy. It was her wish that thou shouldst not be a soldier. To her that trade had brought only bitterness."

The good man sighed and a tear glistened for a moment on his cheek until it fell unheeded upon my hand. After a few moments of silent reflection, he bade me good-night and left the room.

I rang the bell which had been left near to my couch in order that I might summon the attendant, who presently appeared in the doorway. My doublet lay upon a chair where the leech had flung it when he cut it from my shoulder. At my request, the man handed it to me and withdrew. Fumbling it with mine uninjured arm, I drew forth from the bosom the dainty packet Juan de Dios had given me, now all stained with blood, and broke the seal. Within I found a simple knot of riband she had worn that day at her throat, and, thrust through it, a little gold pin in the form of a sword, its hilt all incrustated with jewels. I pressed the favour to my lips and hid the token under my pillow. She had not grieved then because I had had the advantage of her cousin. Had I known at the time that he was also her promised lord, it must have given me infinite satisfaction to have seen in her act an expression of her preference and, hence, of his further discomfiture.

On the morrow, Juan de Dios visited me and told me of this fact, and also that the horses which I had loosed had come safely home to the Castle, where Don Alonzo himself had received them, and immediately ordered forth a half-dozen troopers to make search for the riders. Juan de Dios had seen them pass his forge and followed on foot, coming up with

them as they found the wounded trooper and his companion, the latter now cold and stiff. Him who was stunned had they revived with a dash of cold water, and from him they gathered some account of the affair. Young Alonzo's rage was fearful to see. Juan de Dios kept well out of sight and had the pleasure of hearing his own name coupled with mine in his young master's imprecations. Taking up the wounded man and stripping and burying his dead comrade, they galloped back to the Castle, where Don Alonzo went forthwith to the Governor and demanded dire vengeance. The Governor heard him out and denied his request.

"Nay—I tell thee—I will not have him disturbed. He hath not been at fault and shall not lose the premium of his valour."

Don Alonzo knew well that it was useless to argue when Don Pedro had spoken, and went away fuming and cursing until his handsome face was hideous.

As Juan de Dios told me all these things, especially of the promise made by Don Pedro to give Beatriz to his son, of a sudden my gorge rose within me at the thought of my first vows and, in a burst of confidence, I opened my heart to my good friend, the armourer.

To my surprise, he laughed and leaned over to pinch my cheek in a most unbecoming fashion as I lay there helpless.

"Didst think the old armourer hath no eyes for aught but the colour of the steel as it passeth from the fire for the temper of his blades? Tut, tut! I saw thee, lad, as thou didst bring the little lady back to the Castle that same day, two years or more ago, when Joaquin's black bull gave thee thine adventure.

Thinkest thou that I noted not each glance that passed betwixt the two of ye at yesterday's festival? Was it by chance that the old soldier passed near enough to the maid to receive that same packet which at this moment, I dare say, lieth upon thy pillow? Ah, lad, may the Blessed Virgin and good Saint Anthony be with thy love affair, for it will take the both of them, I warrant, to steer it into untroubled waters! Thou hast made a lofty choice and a difficult to compass. But I must begone! I have other things to do than to wait upon and gossip with a sulking lad."

"Come, come, Juan de Dios: thou knowest well that my hurt is not a scratch and that I am anxious to be upon my feet. What sayest thou? Canst suggest a remedy for mine other ailment? Natheless, I must away from the Island, and the sooner the better, but my soul revolts at the vow that I must take only to break, for by my sword must I win fame and fortune, and thou must remain by my true lady and keep her from that other fate."

"'Tis easier said than done," the good fellow replied, in doubtful tones and with a half-humorous and half-serious grimace, "but we shall see what we shall see. As for thyself,—make haste and get upon thy feet and I shall cast about to ship thee off to Spain by the first vessel that will lend itself to our purpose. So hold thyself in readiness!"

CHAPTER II

THE PARTING

THE hours of my convalescence dragged slowly by and time hung heavily on my hands. The little favour beneath my pillow was of great comfort to me and assistance, but could not altogether relieve my weariness. At last Juan de Dios came with the news that a small ship was sailing on the morrow for Cádiz, and he had made arrangement with the Captain, who was an old companion-in-arms in the naval engagements with the Moors in which Don Pedro Fernández de Lugo had been so eminently successful many years before, to take me on board without the usual permit from the Governor, and carry me safely to Old Spain.

To make short of a somewhat long matter, the next night I gathered together what odd coin I had in the house and, leaving an affectionate letter for the Dean, in which I prayed him to forgive me for my change of vocation and assured him that it was not out of lack of respect and deference for his wishes or for my mother's memory, but solely because fate had so ordained and I was powerless to resist and, anyway, gipsy blood will out, and the soldier's son must to the sword for a livelihood rather than to the cassock. I buttoned my patent of knighthood, which I had received from the Governor, into the breast of my doublet along with the favour which his niece had given me, buckled my good sword to my side, and,

thrusting my dagger in my belt, let myself quietly out of the house and made my way down the rugged old street toward the quays.

At the first turning I came upon Juan de Dios, who linked his arm in mine and led me along the road which brought the people of the Castle to the town. Surprised at this proceeding, I pulled him up shortly and asked the meaning of it.

"The time is unpropitious for thy sailing, lad," he replied, shortly, and made as though to go on.

"Then let us turn our steps towards home, else may mine uncle come upon my farewell letter ere it is time."

"Well, well," grumbled the armourer, in a tone of simulated disgust, "thou art made for a priest: there is no doubting: yet many a good black-frock hath warmer blood than thou and is more gallant with grizzled locks about his tonsure than thou with a full crown of golden ones. So thou wouldst depart without saying farewell to little Doña Dove's Eyes at the Castle? Toad's blood: for shame!"

"Juan!" I cried, in joyful amaze, seizing him about the neck with my well arm and hugging him heartily. "Dost thou really mean it? Hast thou found a way? Here I was eating my heart out to resolve this problem, but durst say nothing."

"Who contrived the way is for thee to guess, foolish boy, but contrived it is, if nothing goeth amiss."

With a heart filled to overflowing with a tumult of emotions, I embraced my good friend again and we went on our way together. At the smithy I made myself up as the armourer's assistant, with the aid of some garments which he had found for the occasion, and, thus disguised, I followed him into

the Castle without difficulty, carrying myself well wrapped in mine ash-coloured cloak.

The hour being late, there was scarce a person about the place save the guards, and the great gates had long since been closed, leaving only a postern to be watched. Unobserved, we made our way across the court and into a long, dark passage-way which ran between two buildings and brought up against the Castle wall. Here my guide left me, bidding me be brief with mine adieus, and meet him shortly at the small gate where we had entered. Pressing his hand in warm gratitude, I followed the narrow passage until I was nigh to the end, when a bit of fluttering white at the window attracted mine attention and I made out a hand which held a morsel of cambric.

"Doña Beatriz!" I exclaimed, seizing upon the slender fingers which were surrendered to me for a little moment, and pressing them against my lips.

"Don Gonzálo!" came a soft whisper in reply, and, through the darkness, I divined the warm blush which responded to the touch of my lips.

"Thy servant and ever grateful knight," I murmured. "How can I thank thee for this boon which I dared not ask?"

"Remember thy knighthood alway and thou wilt have rewarded me, and forget not—forget not—thy friends!" The voice trembled, and I made haste to come to the rescue of her maidenly reserve.

"Dare I hope that thou wilt count thyself amongst them and thus render me forever happy? May I go even further and remember thee by that sweet name—Beatriz?"

"Ay,—that thou mayst, Gonzálo, and now, fare-

well! It is not meet that this interview should be prolonged." The white hand dropped again from the ledge above me and I basely imprisoned it whilst I plead once more.

"Ah, Beatriz,—the sea is wide and the years are long. Tell me, oh, tell me if my dream is thine! I shall be immortal if thou lovest me."

The hand pulled hard to free itself, but I clung to it tenderly and firmly. At last there came a voice I scarce could hear.

"Thou forgettest that I am pledged to my cousin."

"Never shall the pledge be made good!" I exclaimed, marvelling at her inconsistency, yet so fervently that the startled hand slipped at last from my grasp and disappeared.

"Beatriz! Beatriz!" I softly called, fearing lest mine impetuosity had frightened her from me. "Beatriz!" There came a sigh from the window in reply. "Say, dost thou love me? Tell me that, and the heavens shall fight for us. I go to carve my fortune with my sword. Fear not for me, for I shall surely return. Only tell me that thou desirest it, and the years and my labour shall melt away as a dream. Nay,—say not the word which might alarm thy filial conscience. Do but relinquish to me for a moment that pretty prisoned hand which did but now escape me."

No sign came from above, and I knew that I must go.

"Alas, Beatriz!" I sighed, in despair, "at least let me not leave thee as a culprit. Though I am not to bear with me that sweet hope which for a moment I dared to cherish, say that thou art not offended at

my rashness. Where such a guerdon is at stake, diffidence turns into rashness. Dost thou pardon me?"

"Ay,—freely, although there is naught to pardon;" and suddenly the soft hand descended and, ere I could realise my happiness, my lips were again pressed upon it.

"Farewell! Farewell! God guard thee safely and bring—thee—home again!"

The hand was withdrawn, and I stumbled along the passage with careless haste, my heart swimming with joy. The years to come, as I thought on them, were already gone, and—the angle of the passage brought me up short, and 'twas well that it did so, for, as I paused to collect my thoughts,

"Hist! He comes!" I heard a voice, in a husky whisper.

"Not he!" replied another, "'tis not thus briefly that enamoured lads pay their devoirs."

I slipped back along the passage, and came again under the window.

"Beatriz!" I whispered, anxiously, but she had heard my returning steps and was already at the window.

"Gonzálo! What is it?" came her trembling voice in reply.

"We are discovered. The exit is guarded. Is there no other way of escape, or must I cut my way out?"

"Alas! I fear that there is no other exit. I know of none. Who can have betrayed us?"

"I can only think of the youth whose clothes I wear. It is idle to surmise. Yet to be caught thus ignobly like a rat in a trap is——"

"Thou shalt not be caught! I have devised a remedy. Put thy hand on thy sword's hilt and swear by that Sacred Cross—Nay! I will not doubt thee! Holy Virgin, forgive and guide me!"

I heard the rustling of garments, and she vanished from the window. She was gone but a moment and, when she returned, bore a strong silken scarf, which she at once made fast to the iron grating which covered the lower part of the window, and then flung to me the other end.

"Make a firm loop in the scarf and put thy foot into it," she said. "Canst thou then reach the bars?"

Divining her meaning, I swiftly knotted the loop and, using it as one step of a ladder, caught the scarf higher up with my lame left arm and drew myself up, seizing the grating with my strong right arm; then, putting forth all my strength, drew myself up again until my knees found a hold upon the ledge. In another instant, I had leaped lightly into the room.

Beatriz stood before me, all but invisible in the semi-obscurity. I divined that I was in her boudoir. A subtle perfume invaded my senses—the faint aroma of feminine loveliness—and I felt that I was upon holy ground. Beatriz, without a word and covering her virgin blushes with the veil of the darkness, led me to the further side of the room, where she thrust me behind the curtains of the door. With a pressure of the hand and a word of whispered instruction, she flung the curtains entirely over me and suddenly attacked the latch of the door violently, crying out: "Doña Elvira! Doña Elvira!"

Almost in an instant the door opened and an

elderly lady, with dishevelled hair and a frightened face, thrust her head and shoulders into sight.

"Oh, Doña Elvira! I heard a voice at the window and was terribly alarmed! Fortunately I had not retired or I should have been frightened to death. *Cruz y credo!* Holy Mother, preserve us!"

"Nonsense, child! There is nothing to be frightened about. Who would dare to frighten thee in thine uncle's castle?" said the *dueña*, with faltering voice and quaking visibly in the light of the taper which she bore. "Close the shutters and go to bed!"

"No, no,—Doña Elvira! Not till you come and see what has caused the noise."

"Not I, child! I'll catch my death!"

"Then I shall speak to Don Pedro in the morning, Doña Elvira," said the girl, severely, and I chuckled in my hiding-place at the tone she assumed. The old lady hesitated, and then edged her way cautiously into the room, and was finally persuaded to inspect the window where, it is needless to say, the scarf no longer dangled at the grating.

Now was my chance to escape! Flinging my covering gently aside, I sprang from my concealment and brought down the curtains and all their gear and furnishing with a crash upon the floor.

"Ah, Virgen Santísima!" screamed Doña Elvira, wringing her hands and trembling in every limb. "What have we here? The guard! The guard!"

"Alas, Doña Elvira! For the love of Heaven, be still!" cried Beatriz, recovering herself more quickly than the rest of us, and clutching the *dueña* by the arm. "'Tis all a mistake, I assure you. This is

Don Gonzálo de Cabrera, a very honourable knight and upon most honourable business."

"Honourable, indeed?" sniffed the old lady, somewhat recovered from her fright and eyeing me suspiciously as I stood there sheepishly, covered with confusion and festooned with curtains, not knowing what to do nor daring to make a move of any sort.

"That sorry knave! Honourable, indeed!" and again she sniffed contemptuously; and, in truth, I could not at that moment have presented a very honourable appearance. "How now, sirrah! What may you be doing, frightening maids and breaking into houses at these conscienceless hours?"

"Listen, Auntie!" interposed Beatriz, coaxingly, "he is not frightening any one now. I'll tell thee all about it. Don Gonzálo is an old friend of mine to whom I owe much, as thou knowest. Rememberest thou not what a dreadful punishment I received that day when I ran away, so long ago, and the bull chased me? Well,—this is he who saved me that day. They were going to make a priest of him and he does not want to be a priest, Auntie."

"Humph! I should judge not," grunted the *dueña*, sententiously, but beginning to straighten her disordered locks and raiment and make herself somewhat more presentable.

Beatriz blushed at the interruption and continued, hastily,—“So he ran away and is going to Spain to-night to fight in the wars. He came only to say good-bye to me at the window, but Cousin Alonzo found it out and has placed soldiers in wait for him.”

“Cousin Alonzo, indeed!” growled the *dueña*, and I saw that the tide was turned, the crisis past,

and the *dueña's* wrath centred upon another. Beatriz saw it, too, and plucked up fresh courage.

"All I wanted was to occupy thee at the window a moment until he could escape through thy room."

The *dueña* looked at me severely, then her face relaxed, and I was quick to seize the vantage ground.

"I kiss your feet, Doña Elvira. Command me, your humble slave!" I dropped upon one knee amidst my mountain of curtains and raised the scrawny hand which she reached to me, impressing upon it a caress, to which the evident peril of my position lent fervour.

"Impudent puppy! So thou hast found thy voice at last!" she said, not ill-pleased, but rubbing the back of her hand vigorously with a fold of her dressing-robe. "Begone, ere I repent and give thee over to the guard!"

I bowed, and, shaking the curtains from me, made off to the door, my last sight of Beatriz being a glimpse of her shining eyes as she clung about the old lady's neck in grateful tenderness and bedewed her ancient visage with tears of relief.

I dropped the bar from the *dueña's* door in haste, and found myself in a narrow passage, along which I hurried, and shortly brought up against another door, which I unbarred and let myself out into the dusky courtyard. With one sharp glance about me, I drew a long breath of relief and hurried off to keep my tryst with Juan de Dios. Halting at the forge for me to change mine attire, we came at last to the shore and found the ship's boat waiting and impatient to be off.

"I am half minded to go with thee, Gonzálo," the

faithful armourer said, as he pressed a small parcel into my hand.

"Thanks! Thanks! Good friend. And why not come with me if thou canst?"

He shook his head doubtfully, but, finally, would not go. The ship was already with her irons off the ground and in trim to get under weigh, so he embraced mine uninjured shoulder heartily and touched the parcel which he had put into my hand, saying: "Take it, boy,—it will stand thee in good stead, I make no doubt. It is not my work, but was part of my booty from the Moors and was made by a finer hand than mine. It cost many months, if not years, of labour to put together. It will turn any blade, and is soft and light as a silken web."

I thanked him again with tears in mine eyes, clasped his hand once more, and sprang into the boat.

CHAPTER III

THE LURE OF THE WEST

IT is not my purpose to rehearse my wanderings during the next three years. I won some commendation in the wars and some booty, but never did I deny grace or injure man or maid wilfully. A warrior born, as I was, with all the martial ardour and love of the fray, I had no heart for robbery and plundering and for those brutal scenes which degrade the name of soldier. My first sword I had long since exchanged for a Damascus blade of proof, but my jewelled dagger, my first booty, and the splendid shirt of mail, the gift of mine old friend, were still with me and seldom left my body.

Thus I found myself one day in October, of the year of our Lord one thousand five hundred and thirty-five, honourably discharged from the King's service, in the City of Madrid, sunburned and seasoned from the African coast, with half a mind to seek my foster-father, the Dean, and half a mind to try my fortune in the Indies.

At that time there was a great stir throughout all Spain and, I make no doubt, throughout all Europe, at the tales brought by them who had returned from those distant lands. The companions of Cortéz and Pizarro had come back rolling in wealth and stocked with tales of gold and gems and other treasure. Some of the later adventurers had squandered fortunes to no purpose in vain emulation of

the achievements of their predecessors, and many a poor wretch, on the other hand, had returned with wealth beyond his dreams. All of them, whether favourites of fortune or not, had tales to tell which stirred the blood of every man who heard them and set them on fire with the spirit of adventure. As I journeyed through Spain I found whole cities depopulated of those who could bear arms. It was not likely that I, who travelled in search of a fortune, should escape the general fever of excitement.

At Madrid I received my discharge and my settlements, and at Madrid I was to decide on my future, for, as I walked the streets one day, clad in my bravest attire, whom should my wandering eyes behold upon the low balcony of a large and seemingly mansion but the lady of my dreams, the lady of the favour, which said favour, somewhat dingy it is true, I at that very moment displayed upon my breast. There was another female accompanying her, whom I judged to be the *dueña*,—not the one of mine ancient acquaintance,—and behind her, in the shadow, I saw the handsome face and figure of Don Alonzo.

Beatriz knew me at once and, with a quick little motion of her hand, signed to me to pass on and turn the corner. A great pain had shot through my heart as I saw my rival there and feared that she might be already his. I did not know her then as I knew her afterwards. As she signed to me, the load lifted from my heart and, as I reached the corner, I turned my head and saw that she had vanished from the window, so I walked slowly along the side of the great house in order to give her time for the accomplishing of her purpose, whatever it might

be, and thus I reached a small door, which opened a finger-breadth as I passed, and a sweet voice softly spoke my name. Instantly I turned upon my heel, and, as the door opened wider to admit me, I slipped into a narrow lighted passage-way which had a closed door at the further end. Then my hands were clasping hers, and her eyes were looking into mine.

Few had been our meetings, and so few the words that had passed between us that we scarcely knew the sound of each other's voices, yet such a strange thing is love that, by some language of our own, she read from mine eyes that I had been her faithful knight and I read from hers that she loved me. Nevertheless, we did not stop to talk of such matters as these, strange as it may seem, though love revels in the past. We did not enquire one of the other how our days had been made up of thoughts and words and deeds, but she spoke what was most necessary and to the point, and I answered her in like manner.

"We were to have been married this month," she explained. "I sought news of thee everywhere through Juan de Dios. How great thou art grown! At last I learned that thou wert in Africa. I longed for thy presence more than words can say and fashioned wild plans of escape. I shall never marry him! Then Don Pedro got wind of the death of the Governor of Santa Marta and sent my Cousin Alonzo post-haste to Court to present his claims. Now our wedding is deferred because of this business, which hath brought him to Madrid. I am here with mine aunt. It seems that Alonzo cannot bear me from his sight. He sails in a few days for the Indies as second-in-command to mine uncle in this



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new expedition, and well has he deserved the preferment, as thou wilt doubtless hear. All private matters must wait upon affairs of state, and thus I hope for a respite of some months. How great thou art grown, Gonzálo!" she exclaimed again, with a little sigh of content.

Then I told her of mine own ambition to try my fortune in the Indies and of how I had prospered thus far: there was no need to tell her that she was the one maid of all the world to me. Mine eyes had long since told her that. She counselled me to take ship for the Indies with some other expedition, for her head too was turned with the great tales that came across the seas. To this I consented, although loath to leave her for such a length of time; yet it was mine only chance for an establishment. We parted at last, for we dare not tarry, and she gave me her hand to kiss as she had that first day, and the handkerchief, with which she had dried the tear that crept to her smiling eyes, she tucked in my bosom, and then fled through the door at the end of the passage lest she should forget her maiden dignity and lay her head upon the kerchief and weep.

For a seasoned man of the wars, mine own eyes were suspiciously and strangely misty as I turned away from her and set my foot against the door, which now stood partly open, and perhaps it was because of this that I did not notice the shadow which fell across the opening. Be that as it may, I thrust it open and stumbled headlong full against the point of that estimable gentleman's sword whose handsome face I had but just now seen at the window.

Now God be thanked and, amongst his servants, my dear old friend Juan de Dios, for that inestimable

Moorish shirt,—for who would have suspected its presence beneath my gala attire? Had he but aimed a wee bit higher and taken me through the throat, as he might well have done with such skill in fence as he boasted, there had been an end of this true history at that very point, and the point of his sword had been its *punto final*, in sooth; but, as it was, he gave me a sorry dig in the ribs which took my breath for a moment and bent his sword near double. I was at the moment thinking of the beauteous black spot there would be on my white skin that night, and then we both recovered ourselves and stood on guard.

“So now, my valiant swashbuckler,” he exclaimed, with a mocking sneer, “hast taken to begging cold victuals at the scullions’ door or dost consort with the kitchen wenches? Doubtless the latter, as thou art in gala attire!”

“Give thyself no concern for me or my friends,” I replied, coolly, “and thou wilt be repaid in kind. If I have but now stumbled into a scullery door in search of an old friend, thou mayst be assured that I looked not to see thee in the sunlight as I came out, having reason to know that thou lovest the darkness for thy deeds.”

Our swords crossed, and the sharp ring of steel on steel took the place of words. I was his master once before and I was his master still, but, ere we could fairly settle down to business, the gathering crowd and the running watch, which had hastened up at the noise of the quarrel, separated us and I slipped away to the inn.

Mounting my good horse and followed by my Moorish servant on mine other steed, I made good

time to Cádiz, when one considers the state of the road and the accommodations for man and beast upon the way, both being as bad as they might well be. From thence I passed to San Lúcar, where more ships at that time were said to be outfitting for the voyage, and, upon mine arrival, I found many vessels preparing to set sail for the Indies, the City being crowded with adventurers from all parts.

Here were to be seen, and easily marked by their flaunting finery and carelessly scattered coin, the followers of Cortéz and Pizarro, elbowing decayed adventurers from every corner of the world. Soldiers like myself, but lately returned from the African coast and seeking to attach themselves to some of the numerous expeditions, drank and cast dice with veterans from the Low Countries, bent on the same errand, whilst a horde of riff-raff of every description mingled with the throng and occupied themselves as they might, from cutting purses to carrying merchandises of various sorts to and from the ships. It seemed, indeed, as one walked the crowded streets, as though the City were a nest of freebooters. I was not one to fear for mine own skin and, as for my booty from the Moorish wars, it was all well accounted for by a worthy merchant of Málaga, save such ready coin as would suffice for my present necessities; hence, I gave myself no concern as regarded these people, but set myself to mine accommodation with some ship bound for Cartagena or Panamá.

Knowing that Don Pedro Fernández de Lugo, by virtue of his great services on land and sea in the conquest of a good portion of the African Coast and the government of the Canaries, formerly conquered by his father, had been given the title of

Adelantado of all the lands he might conquer and the peoples he might subjugate beyond the seas, especially in the Province of Santa Marta, my purpose was to journey to some other. Without great difficulty, I found one Pedro Telles, who was about to conduct three well-armed caravels to the Port of Cartagena and thence to Panamá, with merchandises of various sorts, and he agreed to carry me to either of these places for a reasonable sum, but could not engage to take my beasts. Consequently, although with much pain, I had resolved to part with them, for I always loved the faithful animals which shared my dangers and privations with never a complaint, when I turned the corner of the street one day and ran into the arms of that man of all others the one whom I most desired to see, my friend, teacher, and benefactor, Juan de Dios Reyes. Here was the place where it was most likely that I should meet him, yet it had been entirely without mine anticipations.

"Life of my soul, Juan de Dios!" I exclaimed, "this world is narrow and short, indeed, that we should meet again by chance! It doth my heart's heart good to see thine honest visage. What of the Island? Art thou long from it? How fares mine uncle? Canst thou give me news of—of—of——"

"Of—of—whom?" answered Juan de Dios, mocking me, as he still strained me to his breast. "I warrant that you have no need to ask, Don Gonzálo. I heard news of you in Madrid."

"Pray be quit of the *don*, old friend!" I interrupted; "am I not thine ancient disciple and thy companion-in-arms?"

"Be it so, Gonzálo. Thine uncle was in good

health when I saw him last—'tis now some four months, or thereabouts. As for the others of whom thou wouldst ask,—Don Alonzo is in enjoyment of vigorous health also,"—this with a malicious twinkle of his eye,—“yet is he not improved in other respects that I can see.”

“Tell me, what dost thou here?”

“What! Hast thou not heard of our preferment? Do we make so little noise and stir in the world that it hath not come to thine ears, or art thou but lately arrived? Know, then, that I am chief-purveyor, or I wot not what, to his Excellency the Governor of his most Catholic Majesty's good Province of Santa Marta. At present I am looking about to purchase some likely cattle for our people.”

“Well said, *amigo!* Take my faithful companions of battle and march! I could not wish them better bestowed. Pay what is just, if they are for the Governor. If for thyself, take them freely, and say no more. They are thine.”

“In the name of the Governor, I receive them. If they are thine, then are they sound of wind and hoof; so no more needs to be said. The price shall go to thy lodgings this day if thou wilt give me the signs.”

By this time we were come to a *cantina*, or tavern, where we entered, and, whilst we crooked a friendly elbow, I put him in possession of my life since we had parted and of my plans for the future.

“How art thou mightily grown, Gonzálo!” he finally exclaimed, eyeing me with the huge pride and satisfaction of a father. “Hast thou forgotten the tricks I taught thee, or hast thou cast them aside for better?”

"They serve me yet and serve me well, although there are others added to them, which I shall show thee at a convenient time.

"Alas! When may that time be; for thou goest to Santa Marta, and I to Peru?

"Come,—Juan de Dios, leave thine ancient master and prove thy fortune at my side in the Inca Empire!"

The armourer shook his head dolefully: "That I may not do, lad. Father and son we are the de Lugos', and the allegiance is not lightly shifted. Not but that I would give an eye to go with thee. Do thou, then, go with us!"

"Gladly would I, were it not for the love that Don Alonzo beareth me. 'Tis an oppressive liking and I must shun it."

Juan de Dios informed me that their fleet was ready to sail, and only awaited Don Alonzo, who was expected hourly. With a crushing embrace, we parted, and I set about preparing my small equipment to embark.

During that day I kept well out of sight in mine own inn, and only after nightfall ventured forth with my servant and made for the point where I was to take ship. Upon reaching the place, I found a boat in waiting, as had been agreed, and took my place in it at once, being quickly pulled to the ship. There I sought the main cabin, as had been arranged, and threw myself upon a sort of shelf, or bunk, against the wall, after having first spread thereon a brace of rugs with which I had provided myself. Ali, my servant, lay upon the floor at my feet.

So motley and ill-assorted was the company in which I found myself, and so hastily gotten together,

that no one at first paid any attention to any of his companions, but each went about his business as best suited him and, in the matter of accommodations, he who first came was first served. As I was weary with the day's preparations, I soon fell into a deep sleep, from which I was not even aroused by the lifting of the anchor and the tossing of the caravel upon the open sea without the Port, nor was I even conscious that another adventurer shared my bed until I was awakened by him stirring at my side and, with my soldier habit, immediately sat up with senses all alert.

The astonishment of both of us was equal and hardly to be measured. There, at my side, rolling slightly with the motion of the ship, lay the armourer to whom I had bidden farewell the day before and had not hoped to see again for many a long year. I gasped for breath and then, somewhat recovered from mine amaze, threw myself upon him and hugged him until his ribs cracked again.

"Have done! Have done!" he cried. "I see thou art not the spirit for which I took thee at first, but, by all the Saints, what dost thou here?"

"Let me the rather ask thee how thou hast come to desert thine expedition for mine?" I returned, laughing,—no shadow of the truth having as yet fallen upon me. Whereat he stared at me, and then he looked about him, first at the low-studded ceiling and then at certain of our companions grouped about. Finally he arose and, stumbling across the forms outstretched upon the unsteady floor, gazed from a port whose vista fell upon the deck without. When he returned, his face was grave and troubled.

"Whither art thou bound, my lad, if thou canst tell me?"

"'Tis safe to say that my destiny is the same as thine," I responded, laughing again, "so thou must e'en come with me to Peru and we shall tempt fortune shoulder to shoulder, as is my heart's desire."

"Not so, Gonzálo, for thou art now upon one of the caravels of the Adelantado, Don Pedro Fernández de Lugo, which touch at the Canaries ere we make sail direct for our good Province of Santa Marta."

At this word, in a moment, it all came to me how, in mine own careless folly, I had tricked myself. I smote upon my thigh right lustily and muttered words without profit, and to which I am but little given, for it never seemed to me befitting for one who bore his life upon his sword's point to defile his lips with curses. Then I laughed, and Juan de Dios laughed, although, in truth, it was like to be no laughing matter. But why be moody and morose when it is as cheap to turn the corners of the mouth upward as it is to turn them down?

"Santísima Virgen! What an ass of the fifth essence am I!" I cried, when I was done laughing. "My boat was to be in waiting for me at the quay at nightfall and, when I came to it, in I stepped without word or password and was rowed to the ship, which, for all I knew of it, might have been Don Alonzo's flagship, and, for all I know of it now, he may at this moment be a fellow-passenger."

"Nay, nay! The case is not so desperate," said the armourer, "though, as thou sayest, it might well have been. Thou art sailing under the command of the Licenciado Don Gonzálo Jiménez de

Quesada, a native of Granada and gentleman of parts,—withal a man of delicate honour and, as thou art in some sense his namesake, I trust we may arrange with him.”

“Well,—I make no plaint, for my fortune might have been worse. Turn again, friend Juan, to thy couch, and in the morning I shall seek him out and cast myself upon his chivalry.”

“And I shall be thy sponsor——” he replied, and somewhat else I fancy, but I heard it not and answered it only with a most unwholesome sound, which came through my nose, or so he said, when we awoke.

We found the Licentiate in the after part of the ship, which was not a place of his own choosing, for he elected always to fare as did his followers, but he had happened to be the last on board and found these accommodations reserved for him by the Master of the vessel, inasmuch as he was the first-in-command under Don Alonzo, and would certainly have been the first under Don Pedro himself had not Don Alonzo been his own father's son.

The Licentiate was a man of regular figure and stature and of a grave countenance, with black hair and eyes and a hawkish nose, yet very courteous and obliging in his treatment of all. At this time he was in his thirty-seventh year, and I do not remember ever having had the fortune to fall in with one so stern in discipline and yet so agreeable and pleasant, withal, in any converse one might have with him. He expressed some surprise at sight of me, but I acquainted him with the accident which had brought me upon the ship.

“You are right welcome, then, Don Gonzálo,”

he said, affably, "to continue with us and form a part of the expedition, if such be your desire, now that fortune hath played you such a scurvy trick, or else we can set you down at our first stopping-place in the Canaries if you find it not to accord with your wishes to go with us."

"I am, indeed, beholden to your Worship," I replied, "but there is somewhat more to my tale, and you shall judge for yourself and counsel me at your pleasure if you have patience to hear it. Here are papers showing my knighthood and my service, and Master Juan de Dios will respond for my veracity."

The Licentiate waved my papers courteously aside and, looking at me gravely, bade me proceed.

"Know then, your Worship, that there is a mortal enmity existing between the Governor's son and myself, through no fault of mine, I assure you. He is the hunter and I the hunted. I seek and desire only to keep an ocean or a continent between us, and yet not through fear, I avow, for he knoweth my blade already."

The Licentiate smiled, and I fancied that he had, perhaps, already penetrated with his keen discernment some of the weaknesses in Alonzo's character. He motioned me to go on.

"That is all, your Worship! My life would pay the forfeit were he to know of my presence on this ship. I doubt if even Don Pedro could or would stay his hand."

Quesada drummed with his fingers on the cabin table reflectively for a moment. "Your situation is somewhat unpleasant," he assented, finally, "and somewhat fraught with peril. Nevertheless, it is

none of my affair and I am supposed to know naught of it. I shall do what I can to aid you, except in direct conflict with a command of his Excellency or his son, under whom I serve. I think you may give yourself no further uneasiness."

"I am your grateful debtor, your Worship, not only for your protection, but for your courteous confidence." I bowed and withdrew with the armourer to our own quarters, where we passed the time as old campaigners are wont to do, in tale of battle and adventure and game of chance.

When we wearied of these pursuits which I have mentioned, I would lean upon the rail and gaze across the blue waters at the other ships of our little fleet, some of them being always in sight and some far down in the offing, and soon I learned to distinguish that which bore mine enemy and his cousin and mother, by the banners which waved from the mast. Once and again she drew nigh, and I could discern figures moving upon her decks and, with such aid as a pair of very keen eyes and a youthful imagination could give, would even believe that I could distinguish female forms from amongst the others. My heart went out with mine eyes across the waves, and I would fain have had it bear some sort of message to her who thought of me, no doubt, but knew not that mine anxious gaze was straining to see her at that very moment. But such desires are idle dreams, although they did serve to while away the weary hours to the Canaries and to prove the adage false which holds that 'tis but a half-hearted lover once he knows that he is loved.

The sea was like a lake in summer, and the dolphins disported themselves upon its placid bosom like

young lambs at play upon the green; and thus it continued until we reached the Island which had been my childhood's home.

Such was our fortune, and it was well for the cattle which we had quartered with us, for the heavy steeds which are of use in war fare but ill within the caravels if the sea be boisterous, and mine own two beasts—that had been—were also my companions on this voyage.

CHAPTER IV

AT THE ALTAR

WE were to have remained but time sufficient for the provisioning of the ships at Tenerife, having come thus far on our way but ill-supplied with victuals, knowing that our own Island would supply us to better advantage.

The choice was mine whether to remain upon the Island with my good patron, the Dean, or to continue my voyage to Santa Marta with the ship, trusting to my good fortune to remain concealed and find transhipment to Cartagena. Upon the advice of Juan de Dios and the counsel and assurances of the Licentiate Quesada, I was of a mind to take what risk lay in this latter project and lie quiet in the ship whilst she might be taking on stores, but, as she dropped anchor in the Bay, nigh to our flagship, signal was made for the Licentiate to go on board of her, and this he did in a boat from our ship. He returned shortly afterward, and gave us news that Doña Inéz de Herrera, the Governor's lady, lay low with that most loathsome disease, the variola, and was like to die. She was borne to the shore that day and to the Castle, which was but a melancholy home-coming to all of them. Upon the third day the good lady rendered her account to the Judge of all the Earth for the deeds done in the body, and there was the pomp of a grand interment and many guns from the Castle and from the little fleet upon the Bay.

Thus, with one thing and another, we were delayed some little time, at great cost to the Adelantado, Don Pedro. Finding, at length, that we were likely to be thus detained some days at the Island, I left the ship at dusk and, wrapping myself well in my cloak that I might remain unrecognised, sought the abode of the Dean, who was Dean no longer, but had come to be Bishop some year or so before. Dean or Bishop, he was glad, indeed, to take me in his arms and embrace me with warmth. He did not reproach me for my choice in the matter of my profession and, I even fancied, took some particular pride in my stalwart form and soldierly bearing.

"Thou hast thy mother's look, my boy, but cast in a manly mould, as is becoming. I would not have thee look or play the woman, and doves are not bred from eagles. Thy blood will out, alas!" and he sighed, smiling.

Then I told him of my plans and how I was minded to fare with mine ancient enemy to the Indies, and at this he shook his head in doubt, but did not attempt to dissuade me. He enquired concerning my fortune and my present needs and offered me gold, which I would not take, but a ring that had been my father's and, afterwards, my mother's, I took from him with gratitude and placed upon my finger. I abode with him in seclusion during the major part of our delay, and then took ship as before with the Licentiate Quesada, who was made Justicia Mayor of the expedition.

Upon the third day of November of that same year of our Lord, 1535, the Governor caused a review of the forces to take place and named their officers, according to his final arrangements.

From my station upon the high deck of the ship I was well able to discern the position of the Governor and his staff and to observe the glitter of well-furbished arms and armour as this most valiant company of twelve hundred men-at-arms, amongst whom were many gentlemen of birth and fortune, passed in review upon the great square, and, this business being well over, they made haste to embark and bestow themselves properly on board the fleet, in readiness to catch the first favours of wind and tide.

Night had fallen and we were gathered in the cabin, where I tossed an idle card to while away the time with a brace of adventurers like myself, mayhap a bit better, mayhap a bit worse, for we are all more or less as God made us, though many have taken in hand to improve upon the pattern and have marred it sadly. Of a sudden, Juan de Dios thrust his head in at the doorway and, seeing me, gave me such a look as brought me to my feet in a twinkling. With a word of excuse to mine opponents, I gave over my hand to an onlooker at the game and made my way to the armourer, who slipped a bit of paper into my palm.

"I fancy it is urgent, lad," he whispered, "although no one bade me make speed or e'en bespoke my service. It fell at my feet as I walked the court, and I espied not the messenger who brought it, but there is somewhat out of the common astir at the Castle, so read it and claim mine aid if it be needed."

I pressed the noble fellow's hand and glanced at the bit of paper, on which was writ: "Alonzo would marry me ere his departure. Mine uncle hath given

his consent. The priest awaiteth us in the chapel two hours after sunset. The fleet saileth with the turning of the morning tide. May the Virgin help me: what shall I do?"

No signature nor hint of how I might help her, but there was no time to be lost, as the sun had already quenched his rays in the sea an hour or more ago.

"Canst thou ferry me to the shore?" I asked.

"Ay; that I can, and wait for thee until midnight, but not longer. Wilt thou ask leave of the Licentiate?"

"I need not to do so, for it may be that I shall not return and, in any case, I am not formally enrolled with the expedition."

I dropped over the side into Juan de Dios' boat, that was lying under the bulwarks with the ripples lapping against its sides and heaving gently up and down with the harbour swell. In a moment we were off and pulling lustily for the shore, whilst a thousand maddening thoughts chased each other through my seething brain. I was more truly at sea than I might ever hope to be upon the fleet, for, twist and turn the matter as I would, I could arrive at no solution of the present difficulty save one, and it pierced my heart to think upon that, although I doubted not that Beatriz would seek death rather than wed Alonzo,—such is the faith of enamoured youth.

It seemed an hour ere we came to the beach, and Juan de Dios leapt from the boat to go with me to the Castle, but I would not have it so.

"Wait here for me, good friend, until thy time is up, and then delay not to return to the ship, for

who knows what may come of this adventure? Thou canst not aid me further and wouldst only involve thyself needlessly."

I pressed him in mine arms as if in final farewell and, drawing my heavy cloak about my head and face, I joined the constant throng which moved to and from the Castle, bearing arms and provisions to the ships or returning empty-handed to lade themselves again. Gallants were taking leave of their mistresses and husbands of their wives, that night, and many a brave fellow would see ill-living ere he came again upon such provision as our Island could afford, and many a stalwart form would rot under the Southern sun or be picked by vultures beneath the great meridional forests of the New World ere one of us would set foot again upon the blessed soil of the fatherland.

I thought not of these things at the time, nor of the future, but only how to deliver the present, which was in travail, and more especially I thought bitter thoughts of my young lord, and thus I wended my way toward the Castle, over the great drawbridge, through the open portals, and into the little chapel, where what must be would be and the future was to join hands with the present, providing always that there be a future when one comes to such a jumping-off place as this.

The chapel stood silent, dark, and empty, for it lacked yet a half-turn of the glass to the appointed time, so I drew back into the shadow of a pillar and leaned my head against the cold stone, but no plan, nor anything came to it, save a chill like that of death. A lone pair of candles glimmered at the altar, and now the attendant moved about and rows of little

flames struggled for life in the chill air and tried to break the gloom. The halo which glowed about the sacred space cast my pillar deeper into the shadow. Presently, one and another of the household commenced to arrive, and I noted that mine enemy was there, shifting uneasily and nervously about and gnawing at his slight mustachios, but the Adelantado did not appear. Seeing this, I knew not whether to take heart or to despair, for there was now no appeal and yet I had madly hoped that there might be. On the other hand, the business now lay more between the heir and me, seeing that Don Pedro was too busied with the preparations for sailing to come nigh us. All were in black on account of the death of the Governor's lady, and I marked it for an evil omen, whether for bride or bridegroom, or yet for me, I knew not. Still the bride came not, although all the company were waiting and manifestly impatient; whilst the priest busied himself about the altar, and Alonzo had twice sent to bid her make haste.

Of a sudden, a hush fell upon them all and I craned my neck to see the cause of it. Beatriz came from the Castle through the private corridor, all dressed in white and doubly veiled. By her side walked one of her maids, and the mistress swayed slightly as she moved slowly toward us, as women do when they are ill or when the heels of their shoes are too high. As though in doubt or fear, she drew nigh to the altar and faced the priest. From where I stood I could only let my fancy tell me that it was Beatriz, for the chapel was dim and her veils were heavy, but a subtle instinct told me that it was indeed she. Immediately upon her arrival the

ceremony began, as though time were already wasted in waiting, and the words of the priest went echoing through the almost empty room to seek out the nooks and crannies in the remotest arches and to search out that in the breast wherewith we suffer and to pierce me through it.

“Beatriz, wilt thou take this man——” My heart sank like lead within my bosom and my very breath ceased for a moment as I awaited her response and my death sentence. Was there to be no hope? Then,—ere the answer came, I fell back upon the soldier’s first and last resort, and, snatching eagerly at my sword, I flung my cloak from me upon the ground and bounded into the aisle. Instantly the bride turned her head and, looking me full in the eyes, raised her hand with a queenly gesture of warning and command. What stayed my course and why I was not observed of the rest, I know not, but, as I paused expectantly, I saw her tear the veil from her stately head and heard her cry in ringing tones: “Alonzo! Wilt thou dispute thy bride with Death? See how that other bridegroom hath marked me for his own!” and she pointed to where she was marked from her ivory neck to the rich ebony of her hair with the little red patches of the variola.

A horrified cry went up from the little company and, as I thrust myself back again into the shadow, I saw them turn and flee with fingers upon their noses, scenting the pestilence and the grim odour of Death, nigh at hand. Alonzo hesitated, and then he, too, followed the rest, trying not to seem to hasten as he went. I looked for the priest,—he also was gone, and Beatriz stood alone, still pointing like a queen

of tragedy to her disfigured countenance, whilst only her maid left her not.

Seeing that none remained in sight or hearing save these, I stepped from the shadow with my sword still drawn in my hand and sprang toward her. At sight of me, my love gave a glad cry and moved swiftly forward to meet me,—then recoiled and raised her hand in warning.

“Come no nearer, Gonzálo!” she cried; “fearst thou not the dread sickness? Leave me, as the rest have done!”

“Not I!” I replied, advancing as I spoke. “I will dispute thee with Death, if need be. Yet were all the plagues of Egypt to afflict thee, thine innocence would render them innocuous. God spare thee! E’en this is better than what might have been.”

“And were I as lovely in thine eyes, Gonzálo, all marked with the finger-prints of the grim visitor?” she asked, with a touch of sadness, and yet with heavenly sweetness.

“Beauty of soul lieth not upon the surface, dear heart,” I answered, and would have come nearer yet, but again she put me off and spoke.

“Forgive me, Gonzálo; oh, forgive me! How can I trifle with thee thus? Yet was I sorely tempted to try thee after seeing the defection of the bridegroom and guests, even good Father Antonio. Heaven bless thee,—I ought to have known!” and, with that, to mine astonishment, she smiled as lightly as a maid at a dance, and again besought me with bewildering sweetness to forgive her.

“Forgive thee!” I exclaimed, in amaze, “forgive thee for being smitten by the hand of God?”

"No, no, Gonzálo!" and, to my further amazement, she broke into a merry ripple of laughter, in which her maid joined her, and then at last I began to suspect the truth.

"Forgive me for this prank I have played upon these people and upon thyself and thereby, perhaps, endangered mine eternal welfare;" and she began to look serious again at the thought. "This plague is counterfeit! Those hideous marks are formed of berry juice and wheaten meal and, e'en now as I smile, sundry of them have cracked off and are fallen upon the floor. 'Twas an artifice of my maid's contriving, who had heard tell of the thing being tried long ago, I know not where, with perfect success."

But already I had her two hands clasped in mine and was forgiving her, and there we were chattering away like two giddy maids, to make profit of the time, not thinking of my present peril should any one return, nor of aught else save the happy outcome of the affair. She it was who first came to her senses and bade me begone, so we knelt upon the altar steps and there we solemnly plighted our troth with hands united and faces upturned to the great Christ who looked down upon us out of the gloom. Then I strained her for a little moment to my breast, and the two young girls vanished into the darkness, whilst I strode back to the beach, so light of heart that I swung my cloak upon mine arm and let the night-wind blow my golden locks about my face to advertise my presence to mine enemy, should fortune thus favour him. 'Twas Juan de Dios rebuked me for my folly, but I cared not for what he said, but hugged him till he threatened to push me into the

sea, and I left not off. No need was there to tell him that all had gone well with me, and, because of this, he was immensely satisfied, and thus we came again to the ship two hours or thereabouts before midnight.

CHAPTER V

ADRIFT .

OF the ship's company many were to me already known, whilst certain others who had not been with us before had now been joined to our number. We were not long upon our voyage ere our General had brought all these turbulent and discordant spirits under control, and with but a word or gesture could mould them to his will. Amongst us there was liberty, but naught of license, and, withal, contentment, which is wont to come with discipline. Many had sailed these seas before and had brought back to Old Spain no little plunder; but now all alike were more or less light of pocket as well as heart, and the veteran as hot to tempt fortune again as the novice to essay new adventure.

Natural it was that such as these should beguile us with many a wondrous tale of marvellous things beyond the great sea, for here was one who had sailed with Alonzo de Ojeda to Santo Domingo and the Coast of Terra Firma about Cartagena. With him had been the resolute Pizarro, whom many of the ship's company had afterwards followed to the great Inca Empire of Peru: others had been with Hernán Cortéz in that great fight upon the causeway of the Mexican lakes, and, finally, there had been added to the crew of the ship one ancient mariner who had sailed with the Great Admiral on his first famous voyage across the unknown seas. The name of this

good man was Juan Gordo—although he was desperately thin and wizened—and he was sister's son to those Pinzons who had been of such great value and assistance to the great Cristóbal Colón. Having passed through many severe labours and sufferings, his head was white as the snow of the Cordilleras or the foam that tossed at our bows, although he was scarce past his sixty years and more fit to endure than many a younger man amongst us.

With such men as these, hardy all, and knaves as well as honest men amongst them, we saw the great mountain of Tenerife dip into the sea, and gazed far out upon the main as though we might pierce the haze that lay upon the horizon and see the distant coasts of the Province of Santa Marta coming out from the gloom, all glorious with gold of the dying sun, to promise fortune and renown. Yet I doubt not that we could not have seen them had there been no haze and had our eyes been miraculously keen, in that, as is now well known, the surface of the earth is so curved that we might not have been able to see over it.

Other thoughts than these came upon me as I leaned upon the taffrail and saw my last of the Island where abode my hopes of future happiness and all mine anxiety of the time. I bowed my head upon mine arms and sighed and, as I did so, there came a heavy blow, as from a hand, upon my shoulder, and the hearty but husky voice of one who was a stranger to me.

"How now! What is this?" he cried. "Dost feed the fishes on these summer seas, or is there some pretty face left upon yon gilded isle? Hadst thou sailed as I did with the Great Admiral upon his first

voyage, thou hadst had true cause for foreboding at the last sight of thy native land. As it is,—turn thy gaze toward thy fortune over the prow of the caravell!”

I had a mind to lay my hand upon my sword at first, but there was such a something of honest friendliness in the voice and manner of the old man that I laughed instead, and took his proffered hand in mine.

“Nay, nay, friend,” I exclaimed, “I am an old campaigner like thyself, and somewhat of a sailor as well, having been in the Moorish wars; and, although my years proclaim that I sailed not with the Great Admiral, yet am I proud indeed to clasp the hand of one who did.”

This was well said, for it made me a staunch and loyal friend, to whom I was to owe much.

Turning my head toward the west, I saw a blaze of glory upon the sea. The arch of heaven burned in ever-changing fires. Low upon the horizon, gold and lemon faded into orange and crimson: then, over above them, purple died into indigo and the gem-like green of the sea; whilst all was repeated in the calm waters below, scarcely rippled by the light but favourable breeze which blew us steadily on our way.

“’Tis a brilliant promise for thy voyage, lad,” said the old man, as he saw whither mine eyes were turned, “yet it was not thus when I sailed with the Great Admiral. All evil omens sought to turn us back, as though the demon spirits, which had so long kept the savages beyond seas in heathen darkness, liked not well to see the Christian symbol come speeding across the deep, and well I mind the care

that sat upon his brow, as day by day we tossed the spray from off our bows and left the drifting weed behind, and saw no sight of land. Then there were traitors and cowards amongst us: those who doubted the skill of the Admiral, and the wisdom of his enterprise, and saw naught but destruction as our fate. But for my part, little as I liked our unlikely quest, I liked less the thought of mutiny, for a man can die but once, but dishonour goeth down to a son's son."

"Mutiny is an evil word and hateful in the ear of every honest soldier," I replied, "yet, methinks, there will be but little danger of that here. An I be not deceived, Don Gonzálo hath that inborn gift to govern his fellows which encourageth not to rebellion."

"Ay, ay, 'tis even as thou sayest; yet had our Admiral that same gift and even in greater proportion, but the occasion is different. We know now that, although in the region of the Great River there be many dire and fearful wonders and prodigies, such as men that do walk with their heads beneath their shoulders and women who are a people by themselves and wage victorious warfare upon the surrounding tribes, those monsters of the deep which were in former times our constant terror do but little frequent these waters or else maintain themselves at such a depth as to in no wise inconvenience us."

"What is this tale of Amazons I hear?" interposed the armourer, Juan de Dios Reyes, at this moment coming upon the scene with a brace of our other comrades. "By the Virgin, I declare that I am most sorely inclined to pray license of the Governor to change our course to seek them out."

"Thou mayst jest an thou likest," said Juan Gordo, shaking his head solemnly, "but there is more to tell. Good Padre Antonio doth relate that there be, furthermore, a certain people, called the Tutanuchas, that have ears of such goodly size that they do trail upon the ground when they walk, so that when the rain falls there may shelter themselves five or six common men under each ear. For the verity of this the good father doth vouch, and further assures me that, nigh unto this people, there is another which dwelleth hard by a great lake, under whose waters they repose at night. Had those of us who sailed with the Great Admiral known of these things so passing frightful, I doubt not they had carried their mutiny into effect, and with more of reason."

"I scarce can credit such tales as these," I remarked, seriously, "but, if it is a worthy priest who vouches for them, I must e'en accept them until I see more cause to discredit them."

At this a burly man, whose face was seamed with many a scar and pitted with variola, and whose feet had followed the banner of Ponce de León in his search for that spring which, it is well known, doth restore youth and vigour to him who drinketh it, one Pedro de Molina by name, spoke out:

"Thou mayst well credit the tales, comrade, for I can tell thee stranger things, for which I can also vouch, having them on most certain authority from those who have themselves seen them with their own eyes, none other than two native chiefs or rulers who did relate to me that there is a nation called Jamocohuicha, whose people have not been provided by the Creator with those organs which are essential

to us for the reception and disposal of food, as the stomach and entrails, but do subsist by smelling flowers, fruits, and herbs, and for this purpose prepare and cook these things, casting them away when the odour thereof hath been spent. Furthermore, they did assure me that certain odours which were to others harmless, to them were mortal. It is not difficult to believe this, in that odour doth always accompany those things which sustain life and doth appear to be a subtle something which cometh from the odorous thing, as one may know by holding an apple to his nostrils, which same apple, after giving off its smell for a few days, becometh wrinkled and shrunken, because there lacketh a certain substance which hath departed with the odour. It is evident that this smell cannot pass from one thing to another unless there be substance that doth accompany it, and hence man may sustain himself thereby."

"Thou talkest like a Doctor of Sciences, friend Pedro," said Juan de Dios, "but, as for me, I like not the thought of joining myself to this same nation of which thou speakest. Give me my haunch of venison and flagon of good Canary and thou mayst take thine odours and all the seemly and unseemly smells thou canst collect and make high feast-day with them."

At this we all laughed and professed ourselves to be of the same mind, yet were we impressed by the strange tales we had heard, and feared and desired to hear more.

"An the place be so filled with horrid monsters and creatures the like of which hath ne'er been seen before, I wot not why those who have tasted of its dangers be so fierce to return to America," observed

one Diego de Alarcón, a young gentleman of birth, but no estate, who sought to mend the latter in the West.

"America, indeed!" rejoined the old man, savagely; "it sounds but ill in the ears of one who sailed with the Great Admiral."

"Whence came the name, and was it not won by virtue of exploration and discovery?" enquired Alarcón, with courteous interest.

The old man turned on him in mixed wonder and disgust.

"Whence came it! Why, it came by ill-fortune from the rascally Florentine trader, Vespuccius, or, as he doth call himself, Vespucci, who sailed with Ojeda."

"Had he not command of a ship, and was it not by virtue of his discovery that he hath been privileged to give a name to the Coasts of Tierra firme?" Alarcón enquired again.

"Ah!" exclaimed the mariner, "I see that ye are unenlightened. Know, then, that this beggarly sweater of gold-pieces was neither master nor pilot of any ship, but went out as factor or trader in Ojeda's vessel and thus came to Tierra firme, which the Great Admiral had discovered."

"How came he, then, to win credit of the discovery, and where found he the name that hath been given to the new land?"

"By his own presumption, *amigo*, and no otherwise. When he was returned to Spain he made him a rude map or chart from the ship's log and, with what comment he had writ in his day-book, he put all in printed letter and gave them to the world with his Christian name most wickedly blazoned upon

them as the most unchristian designation of these provinces. Verily, it doth raise the bile within me until I am fit to choke when I think upon it, that the name of Columbus should not be given to that land which he discovered."

As the good fellow seemed, indeed, truly afflicted by the thought, our little gathering broke up and each sought his sleeping-place in the darkness, for the sun had long since sunk to rest in the sea.

In converse such as this and right good fellowship, our days were passed, and naught but favouring winds blew us upon our way, which was a cause of great comfort to the cattle embarked with us in the ship for the future use of the cavaliers. We made all sail for our destination and held upon our course some four and twenty days when, one morning, the ship of our Vice-Commander, the Governor's son, drew towards us and made signal of distress, whereat we took in sail and lowered our boat, and, as the sea was calm, easily approached the other ship.

Having some misgiving at the approach of the vessel, I repaired to a position from whence I might readily observe what should come to pass without myself being visible, and, in this way, I soon espied the boat returning with Don Alonzo de Lugo and certain of his effects therein.

The reason for his visit I did not then know, but was afterwards informed that certain ones of the crew having been taken ill, and it being suspected that their distemper was that same fatal malady which had lately cost his mother, Doña Inéz, her life, our General made haste to remove himself and his effects to our ship, heedless of the danger of infection which he thereby brought upon us.

I was at my wit's end as I saw the boat approaching, for, did he elect to remain with us, there was but a small chance that my presence would remain unknown to him, and I could scarcely hope to escape his enmity, for one like him doth not easily forget nor readily forgive.

Being, therefore, in these straits, I sought out our Captain, Don Gonzálo Jiménez de Quesada, and made known to him my fears, which I found he shared and upon which he had already reflected. There were no means of concealing my person, excepting with the stores or in that small cabin which had been allotted to Don Gonzálo, who, being without knowledge, at the time, of Don Alonzo's intention to remain with us, did most freely and generously offer it to me for my present refuge, which gracious favour I refused to accept and chose rather to conceal myself amongst the ship's stores, where I might remain unseen, although in most serious discomfort.

Thus it fell about that I straightway called my good servant, Ali, and bade him remove my small belongings at once to the hold of the vessel, and, having instructed him to supply me with food during the time that I should be forced to remain in seclusion, I betook myself to my dark and lonely quarters.

In the meantime, the Licentiate passed the word to the ship's company that I was out of favour with our General, and such was the weight of his influence with them that it was most unlikely that my whereabouts would be revealed.

Had I counted the cost ere I bestowed myself in that dismal and unwholesome place, I think I had

preferred to brave my peril, not only because a true soldier liketh not to fly before the enemy, but because of mine own sufferings there.

During the hours of daylight, which were, verily, as long as weeks had been, and which were also indifferently like those of night to me, I lay upon some sacks of grain and sweat rivers of moisture, and was minded of the fashion employed by the Moors to reduce the fever accompanying certain distempers, by enclosing the infirm in a heated compartment until such a time as the profuse transpiration might let out of the body the fire of the fever.

The fever which burned in me was not such an one as might be reduced by this process, but rather be augmented. Furthermore, the interior of the ship was infested with a great host of rats, which vile animals seemed to find sport in frolicking upon my body whilst I slept, and, although they did but slightly molest me beyond nibbling once and again at my fingers and toes, yet often I awoke to find one crouching upon my face, which was something less than pleasant.

So greatly did my courage decline and ooze away as a result of these petty circumstances that, instead of being able to face such dangers as there might be for me, I lay there in the gloom, quaking with unmanly terror at every noise or imagined sound, in the belief that mine enemy had become apprised of my presence and was come at last to seek me.

I bore as best I could all these discomforts during all of two days and nights—would that my last upon earth may be as long!—and then I determined to venture forth upon the deck during the hours of the night when Don Alonzo might be safely con-
jec-

tured to be in sleep below, and therefore I directed Ali, when next he brought me my victuals, to advise me when this should be the case, that I might seek the fresh air above.

Words fail me to express my delight in breathing the salty sweetness of the midnight air as I crawled weakly from my hole and took my place upon the deck. Soon my strength and somewhat of my courage came back to me, so that I sent Ali to bring me a flask of Canary and a great piece each of ship's bread and salted meat, for I had been able to eat but little whilst below, and now my hunger for food was returning to me with the salted air of the sea.

I paced the deck or conversed in low tones with the watch and, ere the sun rose, betook myself again to my hiding-place, greatly refreshed and strengthened. The following night I did the same, but the third night, impatient for Ali's coming, I peered forth from my retreat and, noting that the ship was in silence and the night obscure, I buckled on my good sword and stepped forth upon the deck, where the first person I beheld was my faithful Ali, who started as he saw me, laid his finger on his lips, and motioned me to return.

At sight of the panic that he was in, I understood that something was amiss and that I had erred in my judgment. I turned quickly to retreat whilst there was yet time, but, alas! I found that I was too late, for, as I spun upon my heel and darted into the gloom from whence I had emerged, I brought up most heartily against some person who was hastily approaching from out the darkness behind me.

To this day I find some certain satisfaction in the thought of the most lusty jolting which I gave this

stealthy individual, for, though but a lad in years as yet, my heart burned hotly within a well-knit and seasoned frame six feet in height, and, in my hasty endeavour to retrace my steps, I did most cordially encounter mine ancient enemy.

"What ho!" he cried—when he could—in voice of angry command; "whom have we here at these unseemly hours that doth race about the ship like some mad being? Bring a light! The watch!"

From his voice I gathered, in that same instant, that no suspicion of mine identity had crossed his mind.

I could see no way to pass without forcing Don Alonzo aside, for I found myself in a narrow passage and, at the other extreme, the watch now approached with a lanthorn. I saw that I must declare myself and be on guard, or be examined with the light like a thief in the night and my face recognised, so I stepped back for elbow-room and drew my sword as though it were a toy with which I sought diversion, and then I spoke in a tone of mock courtesy.

"Give you good-even, Don Alonzo Luís de Lugo, Deputy Governor of his most Catholic Majesty's Province of Santa Marta and Knight of Santiago;" for this habit had the King lately bestowed upon him in recognition of the great military services of his forbears. "We meet again. I am your most humble servant."

"What voice is this?" he cried, with a gasp of astonishment, not unmixed with terror. "Dost rise out of the deep to confront me? But, nay; I know thee well and thy charlatan tricks! 'Tis well! Nothing doth content me more, for here and now shall be cancelled a certain ancient score and I shall pay thee

interest as well, with cheerful alacrity." Whereat he laughed a most unwholesome wicked laugh and glanced about the field of battle as doth any good general ere he lifteth the gage of war.

I stood on guard and waited patiently, expecting to see him draw near, but suddenly he turned and, slipping through a small door in the passage-way between the two cabins, thrust the bolts into their sockets, and was gone. A few moments later he appeared at the end of the passage with a small party of arquebuziers, and a similar party appeared at the other side of the ship, cutting off my retreat. By the light of the lanthorn, I could see the same mocking smile upon the face of Don Alonzo as before.

"Thinkest thou that I shall measure swords with thee, thou foundling cur?" he cried. "Such as thou die by the hand of the executioner! Wilt thou surrender?"

"Nay!" I cried.

"Here, men, make ready your arms!" was the instant response, and I thought he seemed glad at my reply. "Have a care that ye send not some comrade to the abyss, for ye have him betwixt two fires! Now, let one and another shoot singly, with careful aim, until ye bring him down!"

So this infernal trap was to be a soldier's end, shot like a beast of prey in a pit, or like a dog with the rabies! Nevertheless, I bethought me to die like a man, if I must needs die, so I thrust my sword into its scabbard and, folding mine arms, looked up, expecting to feel the ball in my breast, but mine eye caught the high deck over the after-cabin, which had a stout rail somewhat above my head. Al-

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though I have tarried long in the telling, all this took place in a little moment, and I sprang up and seized the rail, drawing myself up on the poop just as the man-at-arms let fly his shot, which splintered the wood from the planking by my hand, but touched me not. I know not if his aim was poor, or if he did turn it aside of intent, but I know that the distance was short and that there was but little excuse for the miss.

Mine enemy waxed white with wrath as he saw his vengeance deferred; nevertheless, I was still caught in the same trap and nor he nor I could see a way of escape, for I now stood upon the high poop of the vessel, outlined clearly against the sky, and a better and an easier target than I had been before.

I was not minded to die like a dog when choice was given me, nor let mine enemy gloat over my mutilated carcase and spurn it with his foot, to take the tale to his cousin on his return, so I laughed in his face as he cried to his men to fire upon me, and then, bowing and waving my hand in courteous farewell, I flung myself from my lofty position into the sea, as I oft had dived into the Bay at Tenerife from some high point of rock.

Rising to the surface in a moment, not far astern, and looking toward the ship, I saw, outlined against the sky, a form which I recognised as that of one of the mariners of the ship. The man bore in his arms a bench, which he had hastily cut from its lashings, and, raising it high above his head, he flung it towards me as I vanished in the wake of the vessel.

I heard him cry: "'Tis a frail craft, but, such as it is, thou must e'en navigate with it to the Indies,

or find thy grave beneath the sea. Hadst thou sailed with the Great Admiral——”

Here I lost what further he would have said, but swam toward the bench which was tossing about upon the waves and, resting myself partially upon it, took such account of my position as the darkness permitted.

It became immediately evident that I had naught to hope for, save from some other ship of the squadron, and, even in that case, I was likely to fall into the hands of Don Alonzo in case he should make search of the other vessels or, certainly, upon arriving at Santa Marta: furthermore, the weather being continuously fair, our fleet had maintained throughout the voyage a formation like to the letter V in shape and having our ship in the apex or angle, hence there was but little hope that I should be able to reach any of the other vessels unless borne to one side or the other by some swift current. Then it came to my mind that the good Juan Gordo had been intensioned to comfort me with the thought that the craft upon which I now found myself was but little worse than those caravels, the *Pinta* and the *Niña*, which had accompanied the Great Admiral upon his first voyage; yet, were I able to navigate to the Indies with such a frail vessel, I was like to be such a time on the way as to suffer from hunger and thirst. There was a certain vein of humour in these reflections—although not in my position—and I laughed as I lay a-drifting, so little could I at the moment realise all the horrors of my situation and the certain and inevitable fate to which I was doomed.

CHAPTER VI

SANTA MARTA

FOR some time as my bench and I rose and fell upon the waves, I could make out the lights to right and left which were displayed by the different ships of the fleet, and I knew by these that I approached neither to the one side nor to the other but kept my position in the centre and fell away rapidly behind. Thus time went by and first one and then another of the lights vanished. At the disappearance of the last of them, for the first time I began to feel the dreadfulness of my solitude upon the deep, and I was glad that there lay within the breast of my doublet a letter assuring me of the prayers of the lady of my heart, which Juan de Dios had handed me ere I left mine uncle's house. Alas,—I was never to see her more nor were mine eyes ever to look again upon those rocks rising out of the sea, which had cradled my childhood and now held the lady of the letter. So now my thoughts turned into a new channel and I began to think with more attention than ever before upon those things which have to do with eternity, although they once had been the subject of my daily study and controversy with the good monks of the Seminary.

In the lack of immediate necessity for action my piety increased somewhat in proportion to the protractedness of mine expectation of death and, whereas at first my thoughts ran all upon the years

of my past life, now they were all turned upon the hereafter and the future of mine own sinful soul. Not that I was more sinful than another, rather less than most men, perhaps, yet could I not plead my perfect freedom from infraction of the law and thus I came under condemnation.

The day broke at last, however, and I gazed about me in that direction in which the lights of the fleet had disappeared, which was opposite the rising sun, but the ships had long since passed wholly out of sight.

My case was extremely desperate, and already the pangs of hunger had come upon me, but, as the sun rose higher and higher, the gnawing of a great thirst made me forget all else. The wind blew steadily toward the occident and, as my bark rose and fell with the waves, I looked ever toward the land of my desire, when, suddenly, about two hours before midday, there fell upon mine ear a creaking sound such as is made by blocks and cordage and other rigging and gear of a ship, and is not easily mistaken for any other; but this sound came from the east, and I must needs turn my head and look back, for I had turned myself away from the sun, because of the glare upon the waters. I saw to my great amaze, distant some hundred fathoms, the most welcome sight save one that ever mine eyes descried. Fast beating up before the wind was a fair and shapely caravel which would be upon me in a moment. I cried aloud as well as I could, for my tongue and throat were parched with thirst and with the salt of the sea, but must have made but little noise, for the ship's watch gave no heed and in a moment the vessel was upon me.

For one in such desperate straits as myself it was not to be expected that such a strange hazard would be profitless, fraught though it was with peril, so I seized the chains with both hands as the caravel passed over me and was at once swept into the waters under the bows. Mine arms strained in their sockets and, for the moment, I fancied they had been torn thereout; then the vessel rose upon a wave and thrust more of her bulk out of the sea, and I knew that I should be drawn under her did I not by a supreme effort improve this little moment when I was free from the suction of the waves. Therefore I put forth all my strength and drew myself up into the chains, where I sank down exhausted and faint, and thanked God for that work at the forge of Juan de Dios which had seasoned my young muscles, and for the three years of sword practice which had given me a grip of steel, and so, for the time, I had no other thought.

How long I remained in this state of semi-stupor I know not, but at last I recovered somewhat and made bold to ascend to the level of the deck, over which I thrust my head and shoulders, whereat I came to the attention of two seamen, one of whom fell straightway upon his knees and, fumbling for his beads, closed his eyes in terror; whilst the other fled incontinently to seek the Master of the ship and advise him of the apparition, crossing himself the while as he ran. Having gained the deck, the faintness again took hold upon me and my great limbs knocked together like a babe's that is learning to toddle from chair to chair, so that I must fain sit down upon the great coiled cable of the anchor and gaze strangely about me like one bereft of his senses.

At this moment the Master of the ship appeared cautiously from the after part of the caravel and having in his hands a most formidable looking blunderbuss, but when he saw the exceeding forlorn figure I made, his fears began to leave him, and wonder and bewilderment struggled on his face with some signs of recognition of my person. As I looked upon him I knew him for that same good man who had received me into his ship some three years before, and set me down in Cádiz to begin my wanderings.

In husky tones, I cried: "Say, good Master Aguirre, prithee tell me what benign fortune guided thee to that particular and fateful spot where floated this poor unfortunate upon a bit of plank in the midst of the deep!"

"Don Gonzálo de Cabrera,—by my life! Now may the Saints be praised! Virgen Santísima! But thou hast had a narrow escape; for I warrant that 'twixt here and Tenerife there is not another sail this day!"

With this the worthy fellow clasped me in his arms and, noting that I scarce could stand upon my tottering legs, he led me to his own cabin, which he insisted upon placing at my disposal, and there he brought me a most welcome dram of good red wine and a substantial ration from the best he had, and left me in great considerateness to sleep upon his own bed, where, indeed, I remained until the following day, when, upon going on deck, I found him regarding the fleet which he was fast overhauling: for their speed was necessarily that of the slowest sailor, whilst ours was a staunch and well-built craft and one that could hold her own with the best.

Finding that it was his purpose to approach and

hail the vessels, I made known to him my recent adventures and kept in hiding as we passed the flagship, with whose officers he opened converse on other matters, saying naught of my presence. Then we drew away and, leaving them far down on the horizon, soon passed out of sight and, without further adventure, sighted the Nevada de Santa Marta ten days thereafter, with the fleet some two days' sail behind us.

How welcome was the sight of those snow-capped mountains, far above the clouds, seen hours before we made the harbour, and bearing promise of the future as the morning sun touched them with gold and silver splendour! Soon we drew into the harbour and saw before us the City which Rodrigo de Bastidas founded, which till now had been to us but a name.

It was high noon when we cast anchor nigh to the shore amongst some few small ships which were there detained. Verily all the ships of Christendom and of the Sultan's empire as well might have lain there without cause to quarrel or to crowd, but, with such a port, there was but a forlorn City that met our eyes. The houses were of the most humble appearance and made of some sort of earth or clay plastered upon reeds and dried in the sun, and there seemed to be no manner of protecting wall, although at present they were in little less than a state of siege by some native chiefs with whom they were at war. Yet were they not cast down nor minded to abandon their City and their enterprise.

Master Aguirre, being obliged to remain for some time at Santa Marta to satisfy the desires and projects of the owners of the ship, counselled me to disembark

and throw myself upon the hospitality of Captain Bezos, in temporary command of the City, who was withal a most worthy gentleman as well as a bluff and honest soldier. The counsel seemed to me good, and I accompanied him in his boat when he went on shore and sought out the house of the Captain, who received me with all courtesy and heard such parts of my tale as I deemed it prudent to lay before him.

"So his Excellency will arrive at latest the day after the morrow," he commented, "and right welcome he will be, for we are somewhat weary of bearing arms through sun and rain and lying upon them at night. Nor do I fear the residence he may make upon my short administration. Empty were the coffers when I came and empty are they now, so the accounting is simple and the vouchers are these same docile aborigines who compass us about and rob me of my rest each night. Yet, by mine honour, thy case is somewhat more difficult. This business of a governor's son hath made much bad blood ere now. Deal as thou wilt with the sorriest knave that ever filched a groat or thrust a knife from out the shadow, but may the Lord deliver thee from the kin of thy liege lord! This matter may well become a proverb, nor doth it need the wisdom of a Solomon to search it out. This naming of sons to step over merit and supplant virtue doth poison friendship and all allegiance."

To this I heartily agreed, but that which is done, is done; and what is said, is said; and there is but little value in complaint; therefore I asked him, without more ado, if he would counsel me as to my best course of action, as I was sore put to it for an expedient.

"Thou canst remain with us and trust the Governor to save thy skin, or thou canst take to the forest and make terms with those chiefs who encompass us, who will, I make no doubt, receive thee gladly and use thy military skill against this place; or, last of all, thou canst conceal thyself and trust fortune to enable thee to find passage to Cartagena or La Guayra by the first vessel that sails."

With this he eyed me keenly from beneath his grizzled eyebrows, and I hesitated but a moment to reply.

"One does not loan his hide for a drum-head with much satisfaction, worshipful sir," I said, "but, as for the third article of thine advice, I have had my fill of hiding and will pass to the first article, since the second is not to be considered by a Spaniard and a soldier. Thou mayst, then, reckon me amongst the defenders of this place until such a time as the Governor shall make other disposition."

"Well said!" he cried, heartily, slapping me on the shoulder with his lean but heavy hand, "'tis a man, and of such we have great need! Don Gonzálo, thou shalt be one of my lieutenants and share my quarters here until the Governor arrive. Here is my state drawing-room for the reception of guests and the transaction of affairs," and he waved his hand toward the four walls of the room wherein we sat, they being of earth, as was the floor also, and some seven varas from side to side and end to end. A long table of rough-hewn planks ran through the centre and benches stood about. Upon the walls hung arms and such like stuff, with odds and ends of half-worn garments. Striding across the floor, he threw open a door leading into an inner room,

and showed me a rude couch built against the wall and with ample space upon it for half a dozen peaceful men to lie.

" 'Tis at thy disposition, comrade! This house is thine own so long as thou mayst elect."

He leaned from the window and called to his Indian servant to fetch us a mouthful of food, which, although plain and somewhat scant, was more palatable than the salt provision which had been my portion for some eight and thirty days. For his spontaneous hospitality the Captain assured me that he was a thousand times rewarded when I drew from out my rolled-up cloak a brace of bottles which had come from my native Isle, and which were a present from good Captain Aguirre. In the ruby liquor we pledged the fortune of the City and of those who held the glasses. When the meal was finished, I accompanied him upon his rounds, and he pointed out to me that the means they had employed for their defence consisted chiefly in placing sentinels at those positions most exposed to attack, who might thus easily call together the men-at-arms in case the natives came upon the offensive; suitable precautions being taken at all times to so distribute the forces that other points might not thus be left exposed. The City, being without walls or other suitable means of protection, was fain to trust to the eternal vigilance of her defenders and to the moral effect of certain sorties which were made from time to time to divert the savages from those points which were weakest and to inspire in them a proper respect for their adversaries.

CHAPTER VII

SON AND SECRETARY

BEING now assured of immediate relief, the Captain was minded to undertake some adventure in the way of one of those frequent sorties, both in order to secure a time of peace in which to receive the Governor, as well as to lay hands, if possible, upon a little gold with which he might content the soldiers ere the command passed from him. Weary of idleness and anxious to make mine acknowledgment that I was much beholden to him for his courtesies, I offered myself to take part in the sortie, which offer was well received, and, accordingly, I was made acquainted with one Captain Cardoso, who was to be in command of the expedition, with one hundred of the most valorous and daring of those in the City.

Having thus arranged, I sought me out some pieces of armour suitable for the occasion and, as I was not yet seasoned to the great heat, I undertook to fare upon the foray in somewhat lighter array than was usual with me. Thus at dark we set forth in a direction opposite to that in which we desired to come at the enemy, for so it seemed wise to our commander.

Here was made my first acquaintance with the mode of warfare of the new world, and, although we were successful and brought home both prisoners and plunder, we also brought a half-dozen of our

comrades for Christian burial, and wounds not a few, of which last I had two which were neither serious nor pleasant.

Upon returning to Santa Marta, however, we were received with acclamations and dispensed further duty that day because of our great fatigues and excellent service. After giving such attention as I could to my wounds, I flung myself upon the bed in the Captain's house and slept undisturbed until I was awakened by the sound of cannon, and knew that mine enemy was come, and hastened forth to see what might be seen.

I found the citizens hurrying to the beach from all directions, together with such of the garrison as were free to join them, and, accordingly set out to accompany them as fast as the stiffness of my weary limbs and of my wounds would permit. Having arrived in sight of the port, the entire fleet of the Adelantado, Don Pedro Fernández de Lugo, became visible in the offing.

It was about seven o'clock in the morning at this time, so I returned to the house to partake of some refreshment and seek out Captain Bezos, that I might be found in his company when the Governor should arrive. I found the Captain engaged in inspecting the quarters which had been provided for the Adelantado at the Inn, this being the only edifice at all suited to the purpose, and, thereafter, I acted as his special aide and attendant until a second cannon-shot from the fort apprised us of the near approach of the flotilla.

We both drew near to the shore and a most gallant sight met our eyes. In preparation for entry into his new government, the Adelantado had caused each

ship to be decked in gala attire, and, accordingly, each had vied with the other to hang upon mast and yard and from the rail along the side, all that was on board of gay and beautiful fabrics, which were, indeed, not few nor of small value, for they had brought a great amount of such stuffs, and therefore displayed banners and streamers in such numbers that, viewed from the shore and the City, the fleet seemed like a great garden of flowers, with such a variety of silks and embroideries of various colours. To all this display was joined the sound of minstrels, of pipes and drums, of muskets and such pieces of grosser calibre as were upon the ships and in the forts. To all of which the people of the City responded in kind, as well as they were able, which, in truth, was but poorly, as they were but ill provided with aught save the merest necessities of their rough life.

When the *Chapetones*, as we call them who are but recently arrived from Spain, leaped upon the shore and set eyes upon the *Baquianos* with their hides toasted, not only by the torrid sun of the region, but tanned as well by the cold winds from the Sierra, which alternate with the heated breezes of the Tropics, and marked their meagre limbs, cased in their ill-fitting and homely garments of native cotton, and made comparison with their own sleek and well-fed bodies, clothed with all that was most in vogue in the way of raiment, with plumes of the ostrich, silks, velvets, jewels, and other fancies, such as they had brought with them; rather than regard these less fortunate beings with benignant interest and respect for their great labours, they, instead, looked upon them as food for jests and merriment, to

which, however, the citizens good-humouredly replied in kind.

As I stood amongst them on the shore, I heard those lately arrived whetting the edge of their wit upon their hosts.

"Ho, ho!" laughed a bedizened blade, as he leaped upon the sand, wetting his silk stockings with sea-water, and changing his laugh to a curse at the boatmen for their awkwardness, "how long are these hides from the vats?"

"Tut! 'Tis a covering of leather they wear for the good of their delicate complexions," interposed a comrade, as he adjusted his velvet doublet, and jerked his sword from between his legs, where it had thrust itself as he leaped.

"Where is the market where such faces are for sale?" asked the first. "I would purchase one for carnival and a dozen for my friends. May one be had for a maravedi?"

"Look ye!" rejoined the second, "what lust for gold! They have sold the meat upon their calves in the market in order that they may turn all to gold." A roar of laughter greeted this coarse jest, in which it was hard to see any great wit, but the citizens joined in the merriment at their own expense, surveying their spindling shanks dubiously as they compared them with the well-rounded members of the newcomers. Another boat discharged its load and brought a fresh supply of Attic salt.

"Now, by the Saints, to-day is for surprises! Who would have believed that Lázaro Boifio's book of fashions had found acceptance in such distant regions,—yet here are all the latest modes! Say—fellow, thou with the wool sacks on thy legs,—who

cut thy breeches? I would have others like them!" The *Baquiano* addressed picked at the sides of his bagging and ill-cut breeches and drew them out to their full breadth with a broad grin.

"Take these!" he cried, "I will exchange for thine, that are overtight in the legs, providing I have a broad piece to boot. As for thy breeches, they are overly narrow," and he made a gesture and grimace of disdain.

"Say, what use are those feathers?" added one Manjarrés, coming to his comrade's aid. "Think ye to fly so high in Santa Marta that ye will have need of them?"

This time the laugh was on the *Chapetones*, who took it not quite so well and kindly. Another and another of the citizens took courage at sight of their discomfiture, and winged so many barbed shafts at their adversaries that it caused some heat on either side. Seeing this, a serious fellow of some judgment, called Quiñones, spoke gravely to the lately arrived.

"Come, come!" he said, "'tis best to leave off jesting when there is work to do. Be we *Chapetones* or *Baquianos* we shall soon be comrades and reduced to equality. Here we give and take hard blows, but there are several thousand savages yonder in the forest upon whom we may cool our ardour. Ye are welcome aid and badly needed, for our labours are heavy and our arms are few. *Viva el Rey y viva Don Pedro Fernández de Lugo!*"

All joined with a hearty good will in the shout and the crowd soon scattered.

By this time the Governor himself had disembarked, accompanied by his staff, whereupon Captain

Bezos received him with bluff and honest courtesy. At this moment his Excellency's eyes fell upon me, and he turned slightly pale and started back, then, recovering himself, he gazed earnestly upon me and exclaimed: "Surely, if I mistake not, this is Don Gonzálo de Cabrera, to whom I myself had the honour to present his first sword."

"None else, your Excellency," I replied, bowing low with hat in hand, "and most sincerely at your orders."

"Let me see!" he said, meditatively, returning my salutation and motioning me to cover myself, "'tis some four years ago since last we met, is it not? Where hast thou kept thyself the while?"

"May it please your Excellency,—I have been engaged in the King's service in the Moorish wars since I fled the Seminary, and there have I gained some slight schooling in the business of war. An it please you, sir, my sword and all that goes with it are most heartily at your service, if you care to give me employment. 'Tis true I left Old Spain thinking to find my way to the Province of Peru, but, as I have brought up at this place, 'twould give me honest pleasure to enlist under your orders."

"When didst thou arrive at this place, and how camest thou to lay aside so readily thy plan of going to Peru?" he enquired, evidently puzzled to account for mine apparent precipitancy in offering my services.

"'Twas a lamentable lack of care that brought me here, your Excellency, and yet a happy chance, if my service can be of present use. It shames me to have to say that, after treating with a worthy ship-

owner for passage to Cartagena and Panamá, I embarked in the launch of another vessel, which was about to sail for this place, and, without in any way assuring myself that I was come to the proper ship, cast myself into a berth and slept, to awaken on the high seas and bound to Santa Marta, where I arrived some two days since," for I thought it not wise to say anything of my further adventures.

Captain Bezos came to mine aid: "Notwithstanding this fact, your Excellency will permit me to observe, Don Gonzálo hath already comported himself most manfully in a sortie made upon the selfsame day of his arrival, because of which he beareth a number of most honourable wounds, although, by good fortune and the favour of the Virgin, I take it that none of them be serious."

Methought that the Governor seemed not ill-pleased to hear such news of me, yet he hesitated a moment to make reply to the offer of my sword and service and, then, as he seemed about to speak, he was interrupted by the approach of his son, Don Alonzo, who tenderly embraced his father, from whom he had been separated for forty days during the voyage,—then turned toward the town and, scornfully indicating it with a gesture: "So this is thy good City of Santa Marta, father mine?" he asked, with a sneer, "and where are these our worthy followers to dwell, I prithee tell me? Methinks there may be found accommodation for our cattle in these huts we see, but as for the people, I see no abiding-place for them. We ourselves would better return to the ships, I fancy, and there establish ourselves until a suitable building can be erected."

Here Captain Bezos respectfully interposed, yet in

the manner of one accustomed to go direct to the business in hand.

"Your Worship will find fair accommodation for his Excellency and his chief officers at the principal inn of the place, which, while not at all to be compared with those of Madrid, is still comfortable in time of war, and hath been especially prepared for your reception. Those who are in campaign will oft go farther and fare worse. As for the men-at-arms and others of the following, there is accommodation for some in the houses of the citizens and the others must needs make tents and booths for themselves until such a time as they can erect houses. We who are here have done the same, and the defenders of the place could not be spared from the ramparts to build a new city in expectation of your coming. May it please your Excellency," he said, turning to the Governor, "to accompany me to those quarters which have been provided!"

The Governor bowed gravely in token of assent, and had taken one step in advance, when, suddenly, he stopped and fixed his eyes upon Don Alonzo in amaze, and, truly, the young man's face would have attracted the attention of the least observant. During the conversation which had just taken place I had kept myself as well out of sight as I could, but, as we moved away toward the City, one who had stood between mine enemy and myself happened to step aside, thus bringing me into view. It is needless to say that, had the body of one dead stepped from the grave to confront him who had sent him there, no greater could have been his consternation and astonishment. From florid that he had been with the reflection of the sun during the long voyage,

his face took on a pallor like that of a corpse, whilst his eyes seemed to start forth from their sockets and his jaw fell as though he were stricken.

For the moment he must surely have thought that he looked upon a spirit, and with much reason, for I learned afterwards that he had caused enquiry to be made during the voyage, on the other vessels of the fleet, whether or no they had rescued one who had fallen from his ship into the sea, to which they had all replied that they had not seen such an one. Finally, he must have bethought him of the vessel which had passed the fleet the next day, for he recovered himself quickly, and spoke to one of those who accompanied him.

"Here,—seize that fellow!" pointing to me, "and keep him in custody until I can give him mine attention. See that he escape not! I hold thee accountable with thy life!"

Whereupon, before I could e'en think of an expedient, the officer laid his hand upon mine arm and made as though he would have drawn me apart from the company, but the Governor spoke in a voice that was cold and decisive.

"Don Alonzo,—I like not to countermand thine orders, but thou art evidently in error as regards this gentleman, who is my Secretary, and one in whom I repose confidence. See to it that he be not molested!"

Don Alonzo flushed with anger, and the look in his evil eye was not comfortable to see, but he well knew that his father's word was law, so he signed to his lieutenant to leave me and follow him.

I was greatly bewildered at the turn which the affair had taken, and yet I was right well beholden

to the Governor for his protection and for the employment which he had given me, for which service, in truth, I was somewhat qualified by my clerkish education. I bowed low in recognition of the favour, as the Governor turned away, but said naught, judging that thus he would desire me to comport myself.

At this moment his party was joined by those priests who had come with the expedition and together they all set off toward the Inn.

Although he was much engaged with the Governor, Captain Antonio Bezos turned back for an instant to press my hand and murmur in mine ear: "Well done; well done! I rejoice greatly that thou hast found favour with the Governor. Belike thy fortune is now made. Ah, fickle Jade!" This last exclamation evidently referred not to me, so I pressed his hand in return and told him that I entertained many misgivings still as to the power of the Governor to protect me against hidden malice and treachery.

"Even so," he replied, "yet, though thou must depend upon thine own skill and wisdom in great part, nevertheless thou hast more than thou couldst have hoped for from the Governor."

To this I assented, and we separated, he to dispose of the Governor and his following and I to seek out my friends, for I had already obtained license from the Captain to quarter certain of them in his house with ourselves, and it was evident that the Governor would not be wanting his new Secretary at such a moment of confusion.

After some searching, I laid eyes upon the armourer at a distance, engaged in constructing an edifice of some sort with sailcloth and some reeds, which he had obtained from one of the citizens, and

with him as assistants in the work were the others that I desired to see.

I approached immediately and, standing a little apart, hallooed to them, whereat all turned towards me with great wonderment and some little consternation, so that I could not refrain from laughing at sight of their faces filled with amaze and horror. When I laughed, Juan de Dios came to himself and, running to me, threw his arms about my neck and fairly wept for joy, exclaiming that I was one favoured above all others by the Saints and he, as well, to have me back again; and the others followed and embraced me also; so that those who stood about wondered at the strange meeting, both *Baquianos* and *Chapetones*, to whom we explained that I had fallen from a ship of the fleet, and had been given over for lost, and yet had reached Santa Marta two days before the others.

I called the armourer aside and bade him leave off his building and come with me to the house of the Captain, bringing with him three others, namely, him who had sailed with the Great Admiral, together with Pedro de Molina and Don Diego de Alarcón.

Thus I found myself again in possession not only of mine own few belongings, but also of my servant Ali and my two horses, which the armourer restored to me as an officer of the Governor. Having transported all these to the home of Captain Bezos and comfortably stabled my cattle with his, I sought out the Governor at the inn and reported for duty. When he noticed me amongst those who were about him, he called me aside into the room which was reserved for his sleeping-chamber and told me that

he had privately made his son answerable with his life for mine, so that I might feel free to come and go without further care and that he would find ample employment for my pen as well as my sword.

I thanked him with all my heart and, remembering what my foster-father had once told me, wondered what might be the interest which led him to protect me from one so near and dear to himself as his own son. Returning to the antechamber, I was given occupation for some time and then permitted to return to my comrades, which I did, in company with the Captain, to whom I presented them all, and by whom they were all most hospitably welcomed.

"I misdoubt me much," said he, as we seated ourselves at the table to partake of such food as he was able to provide, supplemented by certain delicacies which we had brought from the ship, "that 'tis but a sorry look our City wears for those who come from the noble capitals of Europe."

"An thou hadst sailed with the Great Admiral," replied Juan Gordo, "'twould have been a glad sight, indeed, to see so many brave companions upon the sands to welcome thee, I make no doubt, without thinking of houses or cities."

"So thou didst sail with Colón!" cried our host, in wonder. "Then thou art indeed well come to my house. Comrade,—permit me to clasp thy hand again and drain this cup to thy health! I doubt not that some other one of ye, also, hath trodden these shores before," he added, with interrogation in his voice, looking from one to another.

"I alone, good Captain Bezos," said Pedro de Molina, "but far from this coast and province. I followed Ponce de León through the morasses and

forests of Florida in search of that fountain which was to give him back his youth."

"A fountain which none will ever find, I trow," returned the Captain.

"As to that, I cannot agree with thee," replied Molina, "as there is most certain evidence as to the fact of its existence, although not as to its exact location. Why should not the Creator, who hath provided many venomous plants and serpents as well as noxious and fatal waters, also provide such as give life and youth? This doth seem to me to be unanswerable reasoning. There remaineth but the simple matter of ascertaining their whereabouts."

"Well, well," commented Bezos, "we have not come across them in this province and, for my part, I am not going to render myself dropsical by tasting all the waters with which these lands abound, in the vain hope of finding them. For me this excellent Canary, that came from thy ship, doth seem to send youth and vigour into mine every vein," and he passed his cup again to him that held the bottle.

"Hadst thou sailed with the Great Admiral, thou hadst not had such comfort, for we sat in the dark as we ate, that we might not have a mutiny of our stomachs at sight of the worms in our biscuit, and ill-tasting water was portioned out to us as sparingly as liquid gold. The ships were but grudgingly supplied, and with ill grace, save what came from the private coffers of the Great Admiral himself, for none thought to see a return upon his investment."

"Such, I have heard, was indeed the case, my friend," replied the Captain to this observation of the aged mariner, "and sorry was the return which the King made him in the end for his services. But

tell me, didst thou see him in his misfortune, and how bare he his imprisonment and the other ills which befell him? "

"Ay, ay! I saw him with these eyes. 'Twas at Valladolid in the year six, and not long before he died. Yet though he was reduced to misery, the old man had lost naught of his courage and proud spirit, and was even then planning fresh voyages; for he hoped ever for that recognition from Ferdinand which was given him only after his death. His good fortune died with the good Isabella. Yet he greeted me, who was but an humble mariner, with all kindness and consideration. So I saw him for the last time, and left him with the tears streaming down my face for the poverty and neglect in which I had found him."

"Such is life," commented Bezoz, "for its beginning is ridiculous; its middle is worthless and its end is forlorn. God alone knows the thread with which each one of us is sewn."

"Put not your trust in princes, as the Holy Writ hath it," I said.

"Nor in those who have no selfish interest of some sort in your welfare," said Alarcón, somewhat cynically.

"'Tis not so bad as that, lad," said the Captain, "for there are those who most disinterestedly will give a helping hand to him who is in need, or protect those who have no power to recompense. Yet is this virtue as rare as silken hose amongst my ragged crew of fighting men, as I have occasion to know, and no doubt the rest have also."

"For the others I cannot speak," replied the younger man, "but I can remember that he who was

mine own friend and owed me life and honour, hath done me out of my patrimony and robbed me of my heart's love. Nevertheless, because of the latter I forgive the former."

"How may that be, comrade?" enquired Molina, with interest. "Thou hast proposed to us a riddle which thou thyself must resolve."

"'Tis easily done. By the theft of mine inheritance I learned that I was valued for it; for my lady's affection followed its possessor; so, as I hope for revenge because of the affront, yet am I grateful for the favour that hath been done me."

At this we all laughed, on seeing that he was inclined to take it philosophically, yet did we not then know how much of stern resolve lay beneath the somewhat foppish exterior of the knight, and how like he was to square the account some day with him who had done him this grievous wrong.

CHAPTER VIII

THE INDIAN MAID

IT is not mine intent to dwell upon our life during the next few weeks in Santa Marta, for I must pass to those events which are of greater weight and importance.

It was not many days after our arrival before those who had come to the place learned for themselves of those labours and pains to which the *Baquianos* were now accustomed, for there fell upon them a great scourge of dysentery, because the number of those who had come was great and there was no way of replenishing the stores of provisions which they had brought with them. These soon gave out and they began to be pressed with hunger until, as is the case at such times, disease found it easy to lay hold upon them and, presently, their appearance but slightly resembled that which they had presented upon their arrival. Instead, it was rather more deplorable than that of the *Baquianos*, as bedraggled finery is always less respectable than tidy homespun. Nevertheless, the newcomers were not the only victims, for the citizens also were attacked by the distemper, which was shortly after aggravated by some manner of pestilence, which sorely afflicted the settlement.

The matter of the lodging, therefore, became of relatively small importance in their eyes, for one needeth not a gold cuspidor into which to spit blood.

In this situation the Adelantado gave his personal

attention to the mitigation and cure of their infirmities, not only providing medicaments at his own expense, but visiting the sick day and night, consoling and encouraging them with words and deeds and seeing that there was no neglect of them on the part of others and especially in the administration of the sacraments, which kept the priests well occupied.

Furthermore, he personally attended the obsequies of each one, for he seemed to feel their deaths as if they had been of his own family; but, finding at last that all their remedies were of no avail to alleviate the suffering, and having used all the supply of drugs, it became evident that something must be done to better their condition unless he wished to see himself a Governor without a people. He therefore called a council of the Captains and chief men of the Province, in order that those who had most experience in these regions might offer some expedient for the general consideration.

After spending much time in useless argument and the discussion of futile projects, it was determined that those amongst the forces who were strongest should sally forth upon a foray into the interior to inflict well-merited punishment upon certain of the tribes and, upon their return, should endeavour to bring what succour they could to the citizens, in the way of food.

To this determination they were also moved by the impatience and discontent of the soldiers at their enforced idleness and inability to obtain the gold which they coveted, especially the newcomers, who, not having had experience in war with the natives, thought it would be a simple matter to win a victory over a horde of naked savages.

In fact, Captain Salazar made a discourse to this effect in the Council, for, having seen two friendly caciques there, he thought them of but little account, and most arrogantly and violently cried out: "Now by all the Saints I swear that a thousand such as these would not serve to breakfast my blade!"

This same man, some little time afterwards, experienced their skill in war, for in this very foray, he received a little scratch from a wee bit of a poisoned arrow, which despatched him for the kettle of Pedro Botello, so that he gave up the ghost, foaming at the mouth and writhing in most dreadful agonies. Thus he came to learn before he died how differently they made war from that which he had imagined.

This foray having been resolved, the Adelantado nominated his son, Don Alonzo, as Commander-in-chief of the expedition and ordered all to set about the work of preparation at once.

The Lieutenant General, Don Alonzo Luís de Lugo, with that military skill which always distinguished him, began the necessary preparations for the sortie at once,—summoning all the officers and soldiers to the Plaza that he might select those who were to go.

In an hour's time the graveyard air of the City was changed to animation, bustle, and confusion. Men hurried to and fro about various business; music was heard here and there, and arms were everywhere furbished and made ready. The very plague seemed to take fright at the martial preparation and men were healed by the sound of the drum and trumpet. Horses and provender were soon collected and, ere the third day was come, nine hundred men were ready with their gear and accoutrements. Thus, in the

beginning of the year 1536, they set forth in good order according to the art and science of war.

This formation was not long observed, however, because the manner of warfare in these regions is not like to that of Flanders, where a regular method or system may be followed in a country which is plane and open, whereas in this Province one must accommodate himself to that which he finds and adapt himself to the manner of fighting in use amongst the natives, whom we cannot in any way persuade to follow that which is laid down in the books and is understood by those Captains who have seen much service in Europe.

Wisely following the advice of the *Baquianos* in these matters, our leader redispersed his little army as soon as we sallied forth from the City, and thus we proceeded toward the town of Bonda, which was situated at some little distance from Santa Marta upon an eminence. We arrived at a very unseemly hour, for the sun was at the zenith and its rays were very vigorous, whereas had the counsel of the *Baquianos* been altogether followed, we had reached the place in the night and the army had been spared much fatigue and suffering.

Having come at last to the foot of the hill upon which the town was situated, we found the approach thereto so rough and difficult that our soldiers could only ascend on all fours, whilst the horses were forced to ascend by searching a footing first on one side and then on the other and thus working their way up.

When all, both horse and foot, were arrived at the summit, where all the Indians had gathered together to observe what was taking place, we called to our enemies by means of interpreters to demand

of them that they lay down their arms, accept our friendship, and receive the preaching of the blessed Gospel, subjecting themselves to his gracious Majesty, under whose protection they might live in peace and quiet on their own lands; because our intention was not to molest them or afflict them in any way, by carrying them captive or doing any injury to them, but, if they would not accept these terms, the King would proceed to chastise his rebellious subjects by force of arms.

To this reasonable message they replied with jeers and laughter and a great flight of arrows, which rained upon us like hail; but some of the Captains, with no fear of the arrows, animated their companies by word and example and attacked them with such fury that in a short time they had gained possession of the ridge and debouched upon the plateau where the main body of the Indians was gathered.

Here there ensued such a fierce conflict that, notwithstanding the superiority of our arms, we could scarce hold our own; for besides using bows and arrows they cast many great stones upon us, which brought sparks from our swords, helmets, and other arms and made great dints in our armour, broke our shields, and even struck out sundry teeth from the jaws of some. As we approached their habitations it seemed that their rage increased and their fury redoubled so that, when their supply of arrows was spent, they made clubs of their bows and did great damage to our men; whilst some fought with bare hands and with their teeth, clinging beneath our horses and seeking to pull us from the saddle.

On our part, the courage of our men was in every way equal to the desperate valour of their adver-

saries and amongst us many distinguished themselves.

Finally we remained masters of the plateau and the town and, straightway, proceeded to examine the houses in the hope of finding food; yet, although these houses were the best that had been seen by our people in any of the villages round about, we found that they had made shift to remove their women and children and all their belongings, so that our search was fruitless.

Seeing this the Adelantado commanded some of his men to approach the Indians again and repeat his message. Their answer was a great flight of arrows by which six soldiers were wounded. Because of this insolence Don Pedro decided that they merited severe punishment, and so we burned the town and all the standing crops and passed on into other valleys, laying waste the crops and burning many villages and seven large towns.

Having made an end of this chastisement, it became necessary that our army should pass through certain defiles, bearing with us those who were wounded, but, through the bravery and skill of the *Baquianos*, we were enabled to do this successfully.

Night had fallen when we encamped and placed sentinels with great care, and the next morning the Adelantado returned to Santa Marta with the sick, leaving his son in command, as had been arranged.

The groans and ravings of the wounded, because of the poison, were something terrible to hear, and it pierced my very heart to see them thus tormented and with no hope of recovery.

When the Adelantado left us, inasmuch as he had given me no positive command to accompany him, I made shift to conceal myself at the moment of his

departure, and thus I remained with my comrades and with the main body of the army, under the command of mine ancient enemy.

Presently the trumpets sounded the advance and we went on our way a bit, until the General divided the army and led one part down towards the sea whilst the other was to fetch a compass through the hills and join him afterwards at an appointed place.

I shall not recount the history of our terrible march through the defiles of the mountains nor speak of our battling, our hunger, and our fatigues. Although in imminent danger of annihilation at various times, we at last reached the coast not far from the place where the General awaited us. Our pockets were empty of spoils and our backs were laden with our dead and wounded, save such of the former as had been buried because of the corruption which set in.

Up to this point the greater part of the wounded had been borne in hammocks by their almost exhausted comrades, which was a most intolerable burden after the fatigues of the journey and the innumerable battles by the way, together with the almost entire lack of food. Having sent a messenger to the General to apprise him of our approach the news gave him great consolation and rejoicing, as he had given us over for lost because of the delay. He immediately sent us what horses he could to carry our wounded, yet so great was the fury of the madness of the poison that, although we tied them hand and foot when we bound them upon the backs of the horses, many of them broke their bonds and tore open their own flesh. In spite of the great care that they had and all the remedies that were given them, they all died in great agony.

With all the evil that I know of Don Alonzo, there was this to be said in his favour, that he was in no whit a coward, for, methinks, there is naught of the craven in the blood of de Lugo, so, instead of being discouraged with our losses and ill-success as regards booty and the procuring of food and supplies, he was most anxious to continue the expedition into the country of the Tayrones.

We set forth, as soon as we were somewhat rested and refreshed, to follow the Rio de Don Diego up from its mouth, but no sooner had we entered the valley of the river than we again encountered hostile savages who annoyed us all along the way. When night came we encamped in a spot most carefully selected by the General in the midst of cultivated lands, with sentinels placed all about us.

During the night we heard on all sides such continuous blasts of pipe and trumpet that our General thought it wise to break camp ere it was day, so we left the place in the darkness and crossed the river, ascending to the higher lands in the country of the Tayrones. There we overlooked the sea and had cool breezes therefrom, which greatly refreshed us after the terrible heat.

We remained there all day, because the General had resolved to make an attack upon two caciques, brothers, who, having had various encounters with the Spaniards in their own village nigh to Santa Marta, had resolved to seek a new home. Here they had chosen a small plateau, surrounded with precipices and dense thickets of brush and thorns, which it was impossible to penetrate: and on the good lands of the plateau they had extensive crops of beans and corn and other things.

Notice having come to Don Alonzo of these facts, as well as of the great riches of the two caciques, he determined to visit them that night, having found some expert guides who would show him the tortuous paths by which he might reach the place.

We left our horses under guard upon the seashore, because it would have been impossible to take them upon the mountain, and set forth to ascend the Peñol. First went the guides with our leader; then the soldiers followed in single file, each clinging to him who went before and giving but little thought to the thorns which tore our frail garments and our limbs. When one or another went astray, he was guided back by low whistling. In this manner and oft crawling upon all-fours we arrived at the summit, where we went into hiding amidst the standing corn, before break of day.

As we lay in the corn waiting for the signal of attack, we heard the loud braying of an ass, which caused great astonishment to all of us, because we did not know that any such animal was known to the natives.

Some one ventured the opinion that the sounds were made by the Indians themselves and that this might be taken for an evil omen, but Molina, who was somewhat versed in the humanities and given to logical reasoning, suggested that it might be that ass which had been the property of Silenus, which for his valuable services in the war against the giants, was transported by Jupiter to the skies, whence, because of his weight, he was fallen upon this spot and, since this same ass had driven away his enemies by braying from beneath the straw where he was hidden,

so might all the Spaniards come forth from the corn and drive theirs before them, upon which we all rose as one man from our hiding-place and, with the cry of "Santiago!" which was to be the signal for the attack, fell upon them.

At the first noise made by us, one of the caciques, Arobaro by name, ran out of his house in affright and came upon the General, who was just entering the gate. At sight of the armed intruders he seized a horn and blew upon it, whereupon every Indian in the town came running to his aid, armed with all manner of weapons, and so furious was their onset that, instead of finding ourselves the attackers, we had all we could do to defend ourselves. Such a number of the enemy fell upon Don Alonzo that he must have perished there had not Don Diego de Alarcón and myself, with our other companions, come to his aid and slain those who were menacing his life; whereat he thanked us all most courteously, but, seeing me, he frowned and plunged once more into the fray.

On the other side of the town it went but ill with our people for a time in conflict with the other cacique, Marubare, but a fresh body of Spaniards coming up, the savages turned to flee, only to find their retreat cut off, because the General had placed guards at the exits and thus took both caciques alive, together with many of their vassals and a great quantity of jewelry, rings, and trinkets of fine gold with more than fifteen thousand pesos of very fine gold in grains, which was found in the houses of the caciques and the other Indians.

As I was aiding in the searching of the houses and the taking of prisoners, I came upon an Indian maid

in the grasp of one of our soldiers, who was preparing to most brutally and shamelessly misuse her. I seized the man by the neck and commanded him to desist, which he did, perforce, because his breath was gone and his face blue, but he held up his hand in token that he desired to speak and, when I had loosed my grip, cried out: "My plunder, Señor Lieutenant, by the articles of war!"

In this he was quite right, for an officer may not quit a man of his own because of his office, but I bethought me instantly that he was like to prefer gold to his prisoner and, filled with pity at sight of the maid, I told him that he might have such share of the spoils of the village as I might receive, in exchange for the liberty of the maid; and, if not, why he might take her if he was able.

He grinned, and said: "I have your word, mine officer, and here be witnesses to the bargain!" and he turned toward some others who were approaching, but they were mine own comrades.

"My word is enough for thee, villain," I said, contemptuously, "but these, my friends, shall be witness that thou art entitled to all that I may receive of the plunder of this village, in exchange for thy captive. What is thy name, that I may know thee again or find thine heirs if thou live not to claim thine own?"

"Fear not but that I shall come to claim it, mine officer," he replied, with a leer, "but they call me Malatesta, at your service."

"And rightly named thou art, for a more villainous-looking countenance I ne'er have seen. So be off!"

He ducked his head in an awkward salute and

made as though he would relieve the girl of the bracelets of gold which she wore upon her arms, but I cried to him sternly to let her be, as these things went with the maid in the bargain. He left us, satisfied, and yet affronted by my words, which were not over and above gracious.

Whilst all this was taking place the Indian maiden crouched by my side, looking with frightened eyes from one to the other of us, and seeking to read the meaning of our words by the expression of our faces. After her assailant had taken his leave, I saw that she realised that she was now safe, but, to my great embarrassment, she took my hand and kissed it and then fell upon her knees and would fain have lifted my foot and placed it upon her head in token of dedication to her deliverer. I would not permit it, as being unseemly, and raised her to her feet again, whereat she looked timidly into my face and laid her fingers lightly upon my slight blond beard, wondering at its presence and colour. I noticed that she was very comely and well-built and of that colour which is made by the union of that beverage which is called Moca, which I have drunk amongst the Moors, and milk,—the milk being in good proportion. As for her dress, which was somewhat disarranged by the roughness of her assailant, she was clothed decently enough in fine cotton cloth marked with intricate blue figures like to hieroglyphics. Although her garments covered not so much of her body as is customary amongst civilised nations; yet the mode of her vesture in no wise passed that limit which is consistent with modesty and decorum. Upon the flesh of her shoulder, as she drew her disarranged mantle about her, I saw for a moment the

figure of a blue toad or frog clearly painted or tattooed.

Thus I became possessed of a superfluous chattel and an enemy, in exchange for a considerable portion of that fortune which I had come so far to seek and which I needed so badly. I had not the heart to repent the kindly deed, but I was for the moment at a loss how to communicate with my booty and lay my commands upon her to seek her friends in the forest.

I led her at last to the entrance of the village and, patting her kindly upon the shoulder, pointed to the path that led down from the plateau and made signs to her to go, but at this she shrank from me in evident dismay and great tears came to her eyes. She wrung her hands together and then placed one of them on her bosom and, pointing to me with the other, murmured sadly: "Olahla!" which I took to be her name, as, indeed, it proved to be.

Seeing, therefore, that she was loath to leave me and that we could not thus come to an understanding, I sought out Captain Sanmartín, who knew something of the language of the natives, and begged him to make clear to her that she was free to go to her own people. She replied at once that she could not go to them, as she was a captive who had been brought from a great distance, and destined after a certain time to be one of the wives of one of the caciques, to whom she had been given as a present. She begged to be allowed to follow her preserver, whom she was ready to serve, and again she fell upon her knees and endeavoured to place my foot upon her head, but I raised her up and told her that she might come with us, as I knew not what

else to do. I set her, therefore, amongst the other captives and made provision that she be in no way molested, and then I hurried back to my friends.

Having finished all our labours, it was become very late in the day, so the General decided to gather all the spoil, together with the ass, and descend to the coast ere it was night. The Indians told us that the ass had come upon the coast a short time before in a ship that was blown there and broken in pieces. The natives had slain all the unhappy crew and saved only the four-footed creature, which they had brought up the mountain to their village by binding it upon a sort of litter and then drawing it up little by little over the rocks. They had also taken many articles such as clothing, axes, shovels, and picks, which we found amongst their things and took with us. The ass we lowered by the same method by which it had reached the plateau.

Having arrived at that place on the coast where the horses were waiting, Don Alonzo resolved to give back their liberty to the Indians which we had captured and, accordingly, I thought to see my captive no more. Calling together the men, he addressed them in this fashion:

"Gentlemen and companions mine: truly I would not have believed, if mine eyes had not seen it, that the valour of the Spaniards could be so great, nor that they could endure such sufferings and overcome so many difficulties as in this expedition; but I am now undeceived and made aware that those tales which I have heard, and hitherto disbelieved, of their wonderful fortitude and endurance are indeed the very truth and fall far behind the reality, insomuch that I perceive that these spoils which we have taken

are in no wise adequate to reward so many virtues. I could wish that these mountains about us were made of precious metal, that they might be given to all of you as a fitting largess.

“However, as fortune hath but feebly smiled upon us, we must e’en be content, hoping that upon other occasions she may deign to be more auspicious. I would fain make division of the spoil at once, but I fear lest I may prove unequal to the task of making such allotment of the share due to each as not to give occasion for much murmuring and discontent, therefore, I deem it wise to remain as depository of all until such time as I may be able to deliver it to my father, the Adelantado, in Santa Marta, that he, with his greater wisdom, may make the division.”

Upon hearing this discourse there were many who were very well satisfied, and others were somewhat inclined to cavil and complain, although no one attempted to ask that it be otherwise, so we returned toward Santa Marta by way of La Ramada and other villages nigh thereto.

All these places were deserted by the Indians, but certain of our men dug in the earth where it had been recently disturbed and found some stores of gold which had been hidden and these were added to that which was already in custody of the General.

In none of these villages did we find any provisions, but in one of them some sort of a great temple in which were above a thousand images of wood, the size of a man, arranged in ranks therein, and which were said to be the effigies of their chieftains in times past.

The army continued to suffer much from hunger on the way, so the General sent Don Pedro de Por-

tugal, with four hundred men, to seek food along the coast toward the east, but, having found none, they finally espied a caravel sailing nigh to the land, to which they made signs by means of a white cloth.

Those who were in the ship let down a boat, but would not land for fear of some artifice. When they had learned of the necessities of the soldiers, they returned to the ship and brought some two or three hundredweight of biscuits and some salted meat, which they threw to them in portions, without coming altogether to the shore.

After this our men continued on their way and finally came to some plantations of yuca, sweet potatoes, and other vegetables, of which they ate freely and with which they loaded themselves, although it was near night, and started to return, but, having come upon a swamp, they became entangled therein and forty-four men of those who had eaten much yuca and were now somewhat intoxicated with its juice, which is inclined to go to one's head, were not able to get out. Here their companions left them, because they were themselves well-nigh exhausted with the heat of the afternoon sun. When our General learned of it, he seemed to feel no pity in his heart and no effort was made to return and aid them. They all must, without doubt, have perished with the sun or with hunger or at the hands of the Indians, for nothing more was ever heard of them afterwards.

When those who came with the food had reached the camp, division was made to all, but for each one there was so very little that our hunger was scarce appeased at all and we could hardly summon fortitude to lay aside a small portion for the morrow, although we knew from past experience that it was

ill beginning the day's march with an empty belly. Many of our companions gave no heed to such foresight as this, but those who were wiser divided their ration into two portions and hid the half for the morrow, for there were many about camp who respected not the rights of property.

Gordo, Molina, Alarcón, and this scribe were seated about a small fire at the edge of the camp, and in the embers lay those pieces of yuca root which had fallen to our share and which formed the evening's repast. The converse was of the hardships through which we had just passed.

"Thou mayst say what thou likest of our General, Gonzálo," said the armourer, "yet thou canst not say aught against his military skill, his bravery, and his endurance."

"Nor against his wisdom and providence," added Molina, with a sour grimace. "'Twas well thought to divide not the spoil until our arrival in Santa Marta."

"Were it not of more use in mine inside I would cast this bit of burnt root at thy head, Juan de Dios," said I, in jest, raking my supper from the ashes with a bit of stick. "Ah! although it hath burnt my mouth in the eating, yet it hath a most comforting sense and a flavour like unto roasted chestnuts. When, my valiant gossip, did I say aught against our General, an it please you? In fact there is no need to speak when actions speak for themselves."

"What art thou doing now, lad? If this be not treason or incipient mutiny, I know not how to name it. Thou oughtest not to spit in the well whose waters we drink! But as for this division of the

spoil, of which thou speakest, friend Pedro, I ween that there be many amongst us who would be content to guard their own shares this night, in spite of the fair words of the General. A bird in hand is worth a hundred flying, as the old saw hath it. What say you, Don Diego?"

I know not why it was that all of us, save myself alone, always *donned* Diego de Alarcón. Mayhap it arose from a certain air of hauteur which he showed at times, although he was a jolly good fellow at all times, or, perhaps, it grew out of the foppishness of his accoutrements. Furthermore, I know not why some men are never greeted with their christened names, although some of them even desire it, whilst others are Pepe, Pacho, or Juanito to all about the camp, but so it is.

Don Diego turned at the question and was about to reply when, suddenly, he stopped and looked fixedly at a point above my head.

I had heard no sound, although I was sitting with my back turned away from the camp toward the forest, but at the intent look upon his face, I turned my head and beheld the Indian maid, Olahla, standing at mine elbow and, upon her back, a great basket covered with leaves. When I turned about, she set this upon the ground and motioned me to uncover it. I lifted the leaves and found beneath them a goodly quantity of sweet potatoes and yuca, with some other things of that sort.

"By the Virgin!" cried Juan Gordo, "'twas ever in this manner that the inhabitants of the islands came to greet us when I sailed with the Great Admiral, ere they learned to mistrust our race. 'Tis seldom now that they bring the Spaniards aught, save

poisoned arrows, and we must take what we find or starve."

"They have reason! They have reason! comrade," said Molina, twisting a big yam down into the ashes. "I well remember a sight I saw in Cartagena, which it is not like that I shall ever forget, tough and hardened old warrior though I be."

"I prithee leave thy tale for the moment and, if thy jaws be not weary with the refection of which thou hast already partaken, prepare these for thy dessert," and I threw him a pair of sweet potatoes to add to the yam he had seized upon.

He caught the potatoes I threw him and left the tale for the moment between his teeth, whilst we all set about preparing a second meal for which the first served but as an appetizer, as it were.

"Now, Pedro," cried Juan Gordo, stuffing his mouth with savory yams, "have at thy tale an thou wilt, whilst we dispose of these roots, such as I have not tasted since I sailed with——"

"As I was saying, then," interposed Molina, hurriedly, "'twas in Cartagena that I saw the foul deed of which I speak. As ye know, the country was filled with savages far worse and more bloodthirsty than these with whom we have skirmished these few days past."

"*Caramba!* Skirmishes is it thou callest them?" interrupted Diego, "then give me thy definition of a grown-up fight!"

"So, boy, so-o-o! Do you call this a battle? Well, you have yet to see a battle, I take it."

"Nay, nay, friend Pedro," I put in. "Many is the battle I have seen, as thou well knowest, and that not at a distance nor over my shoulder, nor yet from

behind a wall, and to-day's encounter was as warm a bit of work as I could wish to see."

"Well, well! Have it as ye will!" went on Molina, grumbling good-humouredly to himself, "these savages were a bad lot and kept us close at home, so that we oft wanted the necessities of life in greater measure than we have yet come to, here in Santa Marta.

"Well,—as we were upon a foray one day, under one Blás de Herrera, we came upon a small cluster of houses whence the natives had fled but a moment before, and in their haste had left some of their aged people and one woman with a babe at her breast. These we gathered together into a group and then searched the place for what we might find, which was but little enough.

"There was with us a brace of great bloodhounds which were of use to us in finding the habitations of the natives and, because of our own necessities, they were somewhat meagre and ill-fed. For a jest, one of our men cried out to cut a collop from one of the ancient captives, that the faithful dogs might share also in the plunder.

"At that our leader cried out, with a great oath, 'Nay, but our faithful hounds shall have daintier fare than yon aged gristle!' and, with this, he snatched the child from its mother's breast and flung it to the ravenous creatures, who fell upon it in an instant and tore it to pieces.

"When the poor mother saw this, at first she looked in horror and amaze at the mangled body of the child; then she gave a scream that I can hear yet in my sleep and waking if I close mine eyes and let my memory rest upon it, and with that she flew

at Herrera and buried her teeth in his neck and her nails in his face, screaming the while like one gone mad.

"As soon as he was able, for no one of us put forth a hand to help him, he flung her from him and she fell upon the ground babbling and muttering like an idiot.

"There we left her, and as for our Captain, the wound in his neck would not heal, whether because of the malignity of the climate or the venom of the bite, but he died of it some four days afterward, raving mad with the pain and cursing her who bare him."

"Ugh! They *have* reason," consented Juan Gordo, "but I trust that thou hast split thy seam and wilt tell us no more of such appetite-slaying, gruesome tales until we have done with our repast."

Whilst we were thus occupied, the girl stood patiently by my side and watched us with shining eyes, in which I thought I read the most genuine pleasure at the evident manifestations of our appreciation of her provision. Suddenly I bethought me that she might be anhungered and motioned to her to sit with us and eat if she desired, whereat she shook her head but suffered herself finally to be persuaded and fell to most ravenously; from which I judged correctly that the poor creature had eaten naught of that which she had found or stolen. Indeed, she was well-nigh finished with the fatigue and weakness which her task had cost her. As there was no one about who could converse with her, or even thank her for the service which she had rendered us, I was obliged to show my gratitude by patting her gently upon the shoulder and smiling. She immediately took my hand

between both of hers and placed it upon her head and then, curling herself up upon the ground near us, she fell asleep without showing any signs of distrust of those about her.

"She comes as an angel of light, or rather as a most benignant providence," remarked Don Diego, glancing at the sleeping form of the maid. "It seems that thou art not to be so easily rid of thy captive and we are but ill-prepared to have ladies in our company. 'Tis a rough crew and not a fitting place for one so well-favoured."

"Thou hast never said a truer word, Diego," I replied, "but, unless I brain her as she lies a-sleeping, she seems like to have her will and follow me. Poor lonely young thing! She has nowhere else to go, and my heart aches for her."

"Well, may I swing on a bit of hemp, if she hath not done us a most kindly turn to-night," put in Juan Gordo, "and hadst thou sailed with the Great Admiral——"

I know not what the companion of Colón would have added, for a rush of feet startled us all, and some great beast dashed through the embers of our fire, scattering them in every direction and bringing us all to our feet in an instant.

At first we knew not whether the savages or the Evil One himself had fallen upon us, but a roar of laughter came to our ears from a group of soldiers who pursued our recent capture, the ass, which had broken his tether and made off through the camp. Leaving Olahla still sleeping, I followed the others in pursuit of the animal, which had stopped at a short distance and was looking back at us out of the darkness. A short bit of rope hung from his neck and

his spirit seemed to be inclined for a frolick, for he led us here and there throughout the camp, over prostrate forms and between or through the dying fires, not suffering himself to be come up with.

I noted not whither I was going until, of a sudden, I thought I had the halter in my hand, but he gave a quick start, tripping me over the cord of a tent, so that I fell full upon my face beside it. At the noise and shaking of the tent an angry voice cried out from within to know the cause of the commotion and, recognising the voice of our leader, I lay quiet where I had fallen in the darkness, not wishing to have words with Don Alonzo.

"'Tis but our august captive, the ass, your Worship, which doth lead us a chase through the camp," explained one of the men, respectfully, to our General, who had thrust his head forth from the tent after his voice.

"Then it seemeth from the clamour that he is chased by a herd of his fellows," was the answer. "Be off and seek your places, and let the other ass take care of himself!" and the young man withdrew to the tent.

I thought to lie quiet for a moment and then withdraw when the others had gone away, but, as I lingered, voices from within came to mine ears and, though I am but little inclined to eavesdropping, I found enough excuse in the import of the words of those who were invisible, to induce me to give no ear to my scruples but only to their discourse.

"Ha, ha!" laughed he who had just now spoken at the door of the tent, "for a little moment methought the men in their discontent concerning the

spoil had risen upon us. Mine inward monitor seemeth to be restless. However, 'twas but an ass and I am another for suffering myself to be so easily disturbed."

"Why doth your Worship think that there is discontent amongst the men?" asked another voice, which I did not for the moment recognise.

"Belike 'tis my burdened conscience, Saucedo, or my spirit which is disquieted for the success of my plans. Plans of which thou as yet knowest nothing, although I know thee to be most discreet and devoted to my cause. Why should I keep thee longer in ignorance when I must needs have thine assistance for their accomplishing? Upon thee alone can I securely count, therefore I desire to discover to thee, lad, those purposes which I have in my mind and, if thou dost help me to carry them out, it meaneth the fortune of both of us. Accident and the hazard of war have brought under my hand that which will enable us to finish once and for all with these endless miseries from which we suffer and return to Spain, where, with a little that a man have, he may live in luxury and be esteemed by all.

"It is quite another case in these countries, where a knight may not even use his lance and horse in open field, nor his valour be seen by those whom he adores, so I am minded to secretly embark in one of the galleons that lie in the harbour."

When the General spoke the name of Saucedo, I knew that the voice of the second speaker was that of his body-servant, or familiar or secretary, as he might be, for his duties were manifold and not easily defined. I knew not much of him save that he was a fellow of a little more or less and such an one

as would sell the same pig to seven men in a day.

"With license, your Worship," said the second voice, again, "an I may make bold to call to your remembrance certain hard truths of my knowledge, I shall do so in plain words."

"Say on, then!" replied Don Alonzo, as he paused, "thou hast license."

"His Excellency, the Governor, your revered sire," continued Saucedo, after a moment, "as you well know, hath embarked in this enterprise not only a considerable army of his followers and others whom he could attach to his banners, but also all those monies which could be raised upon his estate.

"Even this great sum, because of our delay at Tenerife and because of other unforeseen expense, did not suffice for the costs of the expedition, so that there remaineth the greater part of the freighting and provisioning of the squadron for which he is still indebted. Now you know as well as I, sir, that the coffers of his place-holder, Captain Bezoz, were as empty upon his arrival as hath been my belly throughout this cursed foray, save for the King's portion of the spoils of that sortie which was made the day before we came to Santa Marta.

"Hence, I know not how, in view of this melancholy array of truths, you can entertain the idea of a return to Court, or to our own Island and City, even though there be that magnet to draw your Worship which is found in the young loveliness of your cousin, the Lady Beatriz, providing always that she hath not long since fallen a victim to that foul disease from which she suffered, or lost by the same cause all that beauty which hath made her so attractive. A sorry

figure we should cut, indeed, with one rag in front and another behind, in the present sad state of the Adelantado's credit."

"Thou speakest like an ancient parchment, lad, with scrolls of gold and pigment after thy periods, yet can I say more of weight in a sentence than thou in all thy discourse."

With that I heard a movement in the tent as though some one pushed drapery aside and the General went on in a tone of triumph.

"Seest thou this pretty, glittering heap of yellow sand and trinkets and sparkling emerald stones? Here then is our welcome to Spain can we but get it on board the galleon, unbeknownst to the rest."

"What!" exclaimed the other, in tones of evident surprise and horror, "take the common hoard! This is a most dangerous enterprise!"

"Were I alone, it would be well-nigh impossible," replied Don Alonzo, coolly, "but with thine aid I may hope to carry it to a successful conclusion, and I know that I can count upon thee."

"Yet this is a capital matter, your Worship, and one that I like not the perspective of; although I am not wont, as you well know, to be a stickler for the lesser moralities."

"Set thy mind at rest, Saucedo! I shall see thee safely through and we shall spend in luxury, and in the smiles of those we love, what hath been won in sweat and blood. This gold here is but a small matter for each, when divided among so many officers and men, whereas for one or two there is enough."

"Besides this, the largest share belongs to me as General, and I know that each of the others would

rejoice to win favour by giving me his portion were I to ask it of each by himself; but, as this would not be seemly, nor is there time nor occasion for me so to bemean myself by stooping to petition common men, it is far better to take it all and have done with the business.

“As for the payment of the sum due for the provisioning of the ships, I suffer some remorse, yet in this matter also it is only a question of some few days delay for my father to send forth another expedition and take more spoil and settle the whole account: so, my friend, when we reach the City, I shall arrange with the Captain of one of the ships, who is already devoted to mine interests, to take my baggage on board, and thou shalt make many journeys to the ship in this business until all the treasure be likewise on board of her, when thou shalt advise me and we shall set sail at once for Spain.”

“Your Worship doth advance the argument, then,” interposed Saucedo, with a sly smile somewhat shadowed by doubt, “that the credulity of fools is the patrimony of——”

“Say not the word, Saucedo!” interrupted the General, smiling also. “Thou dost insinuate some disrespect to our person. Say rather, ‘the wise,’ and denominate not thy patron by implication as one who would lend himself to rascality. But, fear not, for I have foreseen all eventualities——”

“Save this! Look, your Worship;—we are spied upon!”

“Ay! ’Tis the shadow of a man! But, hold,—I’ll quiet him!”

Once again the armourer’s gift stood me in good stead, as before, when I opened the little door of the

house in Madrid, for the point of Don Alonzo's sword passed through the hangings of the tent and brought up against the shirt of mail which I wore over a soft leather jerkin next to my skin. Yet was I sorely bruised and, for an instant, thought that the blade had passed through my body. I heard him cry out with the pain of his numbed hand and spit out a great oath in wrath, but, before I could rise to my feet, I felt some one fall upon me, pulling down a great part of the tent and nearly smothering me; then a second person sat upon my legs and, ere I could attempt to throw mine assailants off, they had bound me with the cords of the tent and carried me within, into the light, trussed like a capon. Rearranging the hangings of the tent, the General approached the light to my face and, almost as soon as his eyes fell upon my blond beard and hair, so uncommon amongst the soldiers of Spain, he knew me and cried out in mingled satisfaction and rage:

"Ha! At last! So the knight has become an eavesdropper as well as a hanger-on at the scullery and a spy on board ship. These are most noble callings, in truth!"

I was cut to the quick with his words, as well as with the cords that bound me, for, after all, there was somewhat of truth in his reproach upon this occasion, but I replied as I was able.

"As for my presence here, it is owing to an accident, although, if truth be told, I might have withdrawn ere my position was discovered had not mine ears told me what is of great moment to the army and to the Governor."

"Thinkest thou that the army and the Governor shall have the tale from thy lips, *caballero*?"—this

last with an indescribable sneer, "then thou mayst undeceive thyself forthwith. As for thine accident, my fancy cannot picture the pretty fabric that thine ingenuity would weave to account for thy presence."

"Thou mayst accept mine excuse or not at thy caprice," I replied, "but the truth is that I gave chase to the ass and fell over the cords of the tent ere I was aware of thy vicinity; wherefore I remained upon the ground rather than come to argument with thee."

"Well, be that as it may, we shall consult as to thy disposal and, meanwhile, thou mayst reflect upon thy position, an it please thee."

He withdrew to the other part of the tent, whence I could hear the sound of voices in earnest consultation, although they spoke beneath their breath and I could make out naught of the tenor of their discourse. Presently Don Alonzo returned alone and sat him down upon a stool where he could see my face and gazed at me with much malice and mockery in his eyes.

"Why dost thou not rise and salute thy betters, Don Gonzálo?" with an emphasis on the *don*. "Hast thou brought thy manners from the scullery?"

To this I gave no reply and, as my face must have shown that I felt only disgust that a soldier and a de Lugo could stoop to such trivial taunts, he continued in an altered voice, as though speaking to himself:

"Now, I might stick this knife in him and toss the carrion forth from the camp——" He played with the point of his dagger and the look of his eye

was cruel, but he smiled and went on in a careless way:

"That is to say, Saucedo here would do the deed, that I might not defile my hands with his blood. Yet this hath its inconveniences, for I care not to invite such enquiry as may retard or disturb the execution of mine own designs.

"I might, in truth, or rather in falsehood,"—here he chuckled at his own sinister humour, "suborn such witnesses as would declare that he was made a captive of the savages, or had fallen by their hands, but to do this I must needs silence the mouths of many who would testify to the contrary. If he is liberated, he will apprise the Governor of my plans. His parole might suffice——" he concluded, meditatively.

"Say, knight, wilt thou give thy parole? Nay,—I trust him not, nor any other man. Nor would he give his parole to be silent. Is it not so?"

"Thou mayst pledge thy life upon it," I replied, cordially. "Rather would I perish here a dozen times than become a party to thy treachery, but he who has his knife in the cheese may cut to his liking; so do thy will!"

"Call it treachery or call it common sense, as thou wilt; it matters not to me. I am resolved now as to my course. Lie there, then, where thou art, until the rising of the sun, and seek what sleep thou canst. I warrant it will be little that thou wilt find, if I know aught of tying knots!" He laughed a devilish laugh, and well he might. "At daybreak thou shalt see the development of my plans."

With this he left me and sought repose in another part of the tent, whilst I lay where I was, unable to

move and suffering greatly from the straitness of my bonds.

Shortly before the hour of our departure, Saucedo entered the tent where I was and fed me with some bits of yuca. If the General had known how well I had supped, doubtless this charity might have seemed dispensable and superfluous. When I had finished eating, he forced into my mouth a small piece of wood wrapped round with a bit of cotton cloth, and bound my face with a bandage dyed in blood. Going to the door, he made signs to those without and two soldiers entered, bringing a hammock in which I was at once placed and a light cloth thrown over my face so that I saw no more for many hours whilst we went on our way to Santa Marta, though I afterwards learned that I was placed amongst the wounded and thus carried to the City.

After many hours of great suffering in the heat, without sufficient air and with no water to cool my parched tongue, which was greatly tortured by the cotton cloth which had been wedged against it, I heard the sound of music and voices and the acclamations of a multitude, for the principal men of the place came forth to meet and greet the young General upon his return.

The soldiers who bore me halted, as they had done many times upon the march—for I was no light burden—and laid me upon the ground. After a time I heard the sound of voices approaching and the cloth was removed from my face. Leaning over me I saw the Adelantado and his son, and Don Alonzo looked at me with counterfeit compassion and spoke:

“Ay, he is sore wounded, sir, in the face. It was the war-club of one of the savages that did the cruel

deed. Right bravely he fought and, in truth, I am beholden to him for my life,"—which was quite true. "Mine ancient prejudices are now forgotten, sir, in the kindliness that is born of this deed. The leech hath every hope of his ultimate recovery, but his visage is somewhat disfigured and his jaw broken by the blow. Be assured, he shall be most excellently nursed and guarded. For this I pledge myself and will suffer none other to do him this service, an it please your Excellency."

"Right, my son! Right,—and nobly said!" and the Governor turned a proud and satisfied glance from my face to his son's gallant figure and sympathetic countenance. I knew now of the device which had been hatched in that infernal council, to blind the eyes of the credulous old man, and I wondered at the daring and knavery of Alonzo. Then Don Pedro spoke to me with great kindness and thanked me feelingly for my devotion to his son.

"Cheer up, Gonzálo!" he said, "and we shall have thee sound and upon thy feet in a little time," but I tried to tell him with mine eyes of the treachery which Don Alonzo meditated against him and against the army, rolling mine eyes in anger in the direction of the traitor, but, though I have often heard it said that the eyes may speak the thought of the mind, yet, in this case, it was of no avail, although I well-nigh threw into them my whole soul. When he noticed my agitation, he spoke again to quiet me.

"Nay, nay, my friend! do not distress thyself to speak. I know well what thou wouldst say. Do thine utmost not to invite a fever with thy wounds. I shall see thee again shortly. Son,—see to it that

thou care for him as the apple of thine eye, or thou art not thy father's son."

"Never fear, father mine," said the young man, with fervour and a sinister smile, "I shall see that he is not neglected," and, with that, he let fall again the cloth over my face. Shortly afterwards I felt them raise the hammock from the ground and continue on their way.

CHAPTER IX

DESPOILED

AFTER a short time I was borne into a house and laid upon a couch, where I remained for many hours without hearing or seeing aught. Then the light began to fade and I knew that the night was come, but no one came to see me or to relieve mine agony. Slowly the hours passed away and slowly the pain grew more intense in the limbs that had been so long bound tight with cords cutting into the flesh.

As the night wore away, at length I heard voices and sounds of some one moving in the neighbouring room and, after some time, a light shone through the cloth upon my face and some person entered the room where I lay. Removing the cloth, Don Alonzo stood before me with his handsome evil eyes dancing with malicious triumph.

"How now, upstart *caballero!*" he cried, in glee, "didst tell thy tale to the Governor and what answer made he? I wager my sword that he believed thee not! *Caray!* It would have been safe to have left thee free and unmuzzled, save that I have a little score—a little score—— Hum, hum! What a credulous old fool is he! I trembled for the success of my design a score of times when some Captain hinted at the division of the spoils. I let him think they spoke of some treasure which they wrongly suspected me of finding and hiding from them. He hath gorged himself with my lies until I fear for his digestion.

"But I see that thou canst not converse at ease! Let me tell thee of my plans, since thou art become of late so interested in mine affairs.

"First and foremost,—my vessel is in order and ready to depart. The worthy master of the ship pretendeth to think that we go to Court with despatches from the Governor. There lacketh only the transfer of the remainder of the treasure, and we are off.

"To speak frankly,—I had thought to prick thee deeply with this bodkin, now that thou art no longer a menace to mine enterprise, but, on second thought, I have chosen to let thee live and, accordingly, I shall inform thee further of my plans.

"Know, then, that I am about to marry, for there is word from Spain that the bride was not stricken, as we supposed. But of all this thou hast heard nothing. It is fitting that the nuptials should not take place without some show of splendour, in deference to the station of the bridegroom,—is it not so? Hence I take with me the gold and jewels which my comrades and followers have gladly relinquished to me for this purpose.

"Ah, thou wouldst have me speak less vaguely! Thou wouldst have me name the bride! Tut,—'tis not for ears such as thine to hear a name so proud! Nevertheless, as thine eye is so mutely enquiring, I shall grant this last request."

Here, again, the meaning of my glance was misunderstood, although purposely, for if I could have slain the foul traitor with a poignard look, ere he defiled her name with his lips, I would have done it a thousand times though I were hanged each time for it.

He laughed a demoniac laugh, and went on,—
“’Tis my cousin, the fair Lady Beatriz, to whom, by my father’s will, I have been betrothed now these many years, but fate hath delayed the reward of my waiting. Now, however, all cause for delay is removed and, by Heaven and all the Saints, or in spite of them if need be, upon mine arrival the marriage shall take place with all fitting joy and ceremony.

“Thou wouldst felicitate me? I thank thee! Be assured I shall think upon thee on that occasion. No power shall now intervene to cause further delay. Be the maiden ready or be she not, I care but little,—to the altar she shall go! Set thy mind at rest upon this point, and now,—farewell! Ere the sun is at the zenith, on the morrow, the ship shall be down upon the horizon and then, mayhap, some hours thereafter, thou wilt be released.”

Dropping the cloth again over my face, he departed, and, scarcely had his footsteps left the outer room, when I heard a rapping which seemed to come from the wall. Unable to surmise what was the cause of it, I waited to see what would come of it, as I could do naught else. Again it sounded as before and again there was silence. Presently I heard my name spoken in a low voice, which I took to be the armourer’s. As it was perfectly dark in the room where I lay, I knew that no movement I might make to indicate that I had heard and understood, could be seen by my friends.

Again I heard the voice of Juan de Dios, speaking in a low tone. “If he be not fallen into the hands of his enemy, he must have been cut off by the savages, as the others fear. Yet surely I thought I



"How now, upstart caballero!" he cried in
glee.

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heard the General's voice, taunting him, although I could hear no answer, and it is not like him to keep his tongue in his teeth under provocation."

"Tally one for thee, friend Juan!" I thought, and then the voice of Don Diego answered the armourer.

"Wait! I shall try another device. Gonzálo! Gonzálo!" he called, softly, "an thou hear me and cannot speak, make some sort of noise or sign to show that thou art there and hast need of us!"

Upon this, I put forth all my strength and lifted the middle of my body and let it fall again, so that my couch creaked and groaned beneath the weight.

"Enough!" said the voice, with an accent of joy, "we go for means to liberate thee! Be patient!"

All sound ceased and the moments passed by as before, in pain of body and great anguish of mind. I thought of Beatriz and the dangers that lay before her through the ingenious deviltries of this scion of a noble race, who bore the habit of Santiago and called himself her lover,—as though he could love anything save the gratification of his passions.

As time went by, my friends gave no sign, and I feared that their plans had miscarried and that the proximity of mine enemy, or doubts as to my presence, had caused them to abandon their purpose.

After a considerable time, I heard the door open in the next room and the sound of voices. At last they were come and my martyrdom would be at an end! But they were the voices of Saucedo and his master and, presently, both went out and all was silence again. At this the pain which I had for the moment forgotten, increased until I thought that I should go mad.

Many times had I sought to loosen or break my bonds, but the work had been well and scientifically done and all was in vain. Then I thought to rise upon my feet, all bound as I was, and hop to the door, on the chance of finding it ajar; so I made the essay and, with great suffering, brought my legs from the couch to the floor and raised myself to a sitting posture, whereat, because of the pain and the lack of food, I must have fallen in a swoon; for, when I next came to my senses, I was lying upon the floor by the couch.

At last, after many efforts, I got upon my feet and managed to work my way painfully to the door, only to find it closed, whether locked or not, I know not, for I had neither hands nor teeth to try it. Turning away, I crossed with infinite effort to the window, thinking to lean therefrom, and thus attract the attention of some one without, to my condition, but I found it closed with loosely-fitting shutters, which, nevertheless, defied all mine efforts to open. With the labour, the pain, and the disappointment, I lost my courage and fell upon the floor; where I must have swooned again or slept, for when I came to myself I heard voices at the window.

"He answereth not by word or sign," some one was saying, "and I fear we are upon a false scent. What say ye,—shall we give over?"

"I know not what to say," replied the voice of Diego de Alarcón. "He who owneth his own nose may stick it where he pleaseth, but, as for me, I like not this house-breaking, when the Governor's son is the aggrieved. It smelleth of hemp-seed. Nevertheless, let us try once again! Gonzálo! Gonzálo!"

he called, in a louder tone, "make some sign if thou art there!"

At this appeal, I moved my body all that I could, in the hope of striking the wall or the couch and, by some fortunate chance, struck a small earthen bottle that sat upon the floor, which fell upon its side and broke its long neck against the ground.

"'Tis he! 'Tis he!" cried the armourer, "and surely in most awful straits, else would he have replied ere this. Here, lay hold upon this bar whilst I pry it from its socket!"

I heard the straining and giving in the sash and, finally, with a slight crash, the lower end gave way, so that Don Diego could wrench the other extremity easily from its place. Two more bars quickly followed and then, suddenly, all was silent. Shortly afterwards I heard footsteps in the outer room and presently saw a light as some one opened the door which led into my prison. The light immediately approached and Don Alonzo, for I could now see that it was he, saw me lying on the floor by the window and quickly approached me, with alarm on his face, calling out to Saucedo to come to his aid, but, when he saw that my bonds were intact and that I had merely succeeded in getting upon the floor, he laughed and, with Saucedo's help, laid me again upon the couch.

"So thou didst think to escape me thus easily, my blond giant," he said, in great good humour at sight of the suffering depicted upon my countenance. "Good! Amuse thyself as thou wilt, an it divert thee! but be sure that here thou shalt remain a little longer."

He took the light and departed with his com-

panion and, shortly afterwards, I heard them leave the house together. Immediately my friends reappeared at the window and, assured now of my presence, made short work of the remaining fastenings.

When the last bar had fallen, they thrust open the inside shutters and Diego vaulted into the room, crying, "Where art thou, Gonzálo?" but, without waiting for a reply, struck flint against steel and, lighting a bit of candle which he had brought with him, glanced hastily about the room.

Seeing no person present, but only that which seemed to him a cadaver covered with a cotton cloth and stretched upon the bed, he thought for a moment that the General had made an end of me, but, as I writhed in my bonds, he snatched aside the cloth and saw mine eyes blinking in the candle-light and the bloody cloth over my mouth and chin.

By this time he perceived also that mine arms were bound and, snatching his dagger from his belt, cut the cords in the twinkling of an eye. As the cords ceded before the keen edge of the steel, all the pain that I had suffered ere this seemed but little compared with the heat of that molten lead which went coursing through my veins with the liberated blood which now found its way to each extremity of my body. I groaned and swooned dead away, whilst Don Diego cut the rest of the cords that bound me and dashed what little water remained in the broken and overturned bottle, in my face, to bring me to myself. With the water I came to myself again and sought to remove the bandage from my mouth, but could not because mine arms refused to perform their functions.

Diego thought that I was wounded, because of

the blood on my face, and would not suffer me to touch the bandage, when he saw what I was at, lest I do myself harm. I lay helpless for some time whilst he conferred with Juan de Dios, who had remained without on guard, and now thrust his head through the window to warn us that our enemies were approaching on the other side of the house. Nerved by the danger, Don Diego put forth all his strength and, lifting my shoulders from the couch, with what help I was able to give him, we reached the window in the darkness, for the candle was extinguished lest it should warn our enemies, and, amongst the three of us, I was passed through the opening and set upon my feet without.

No sooner had I touched the ground than Juan de Dios put his brawny arm about me and fairly carried me away from the place into the gloom of the night. Whilst he was thus engaged, I managed at last to get hold of the bandage and tear it from my face, bringing with it some of my beard, for it was caked and clotted with blood from my bruised and swollen tongue and lips. To remove the bit of cloth and wood with which they had gagged me was not so easy, although it was now completely soaked with spittle, but we shortly came to our own house, where I seized a vessel of water and poured some of it upon my mouth and loosened them and thus managed, finally, to remove them, although with great pain.

When my friends saw how I had been treated, they understood the reason of my silence without any farther explanation, but they plied me with eager questions, expecting that I should satisfy their curiosity. Although I essayed to answer them, I was

not able, because my tongue was so greatly swollen that for the present I could not speak.

I went to my belongings and, having found a pen, wrote as best I could, for Diego to read, the others not having such clerkly gifts, and begged them to lead me at once to the Governor, on business of state.

There ensued immediately a consultation amongst them all, for they thought that mine impatience was engendered by mine own wrongs and, somewhat questioned the advisability of the act. So I wrote again upon the paper that the matter had naught to do with myself but only with a certain grave affair of state which had come to my knowledge; and, so great was my disquiet because of the delay, that they feared to cross me further, lest I do myself some ill and, as I signified that it was my desire that all should accompany me, they resolved to set out at once, although it was about five o'clock and was very early to disturb the Governor.

Taking me one upon each side to aid my halting steps, Juan de Dios and Diego supported me upon the way, whilst Gordo and Molina followed closely after.

Reaching the house of the Governor, we found all yet silent and none stirring about the place, but, because of the gravity of our information, we made bold to beat upon the doors and alarm the household, whereat some of those of the Adelantado's own guard appeared and demanded our errand.

Diego de Alarcón told them that the Governor's Secretary was come upon business of great importance and must speak with Don Pedro at once and without delay of any sort. The door was reluctantly

opened and we were admitted to the courtyard, whilst the Lieutenant of the guard went to learn the Governor's will.

Upon his return he informed us that the Governor was angry because he had been disturbed and would not rise, for his Secretary lay wounded with a broken jaw-bone and could neither stand upon his feet nor speak: but when the officer saw that it was really myself, and that my hands and face were smeared with blood, he consented to return once more to the Governor and inform him that it was in very truth his Secretary who stood without. The Governor arose at last and gave orders that I should be admitted, though wondering greatly at such an apparition.

Making haste to enter his apartment, I hobbled quickly toward him and he gazed at me in dismay, amazed at the sight of my face all covered with blood and dirt and my clothing torn, dusty, and disarranged. Thinking me mad because of the fever of my wound, he started back and sought to place an obstacle of some sort between us: then, recovering himself, as I paused respectfully before him, he cried out: "How now,—Gonzálo! Hast left thy bed to make me such an untimely visit on business of ordinary weight?"

"Not so—your—Ex—Excellency!" I faltered. "How can—you think—think—it? 'Tis—treach—treachery! Your—son—Don—Al—Alonzo—flies with the tr—treasure!"

'Twas cruel abrupt to say it so, and for the moment I had forgotten the tie of blood and all else save my duty. The Governor paled with anger and his eyes flashed like a gleam of steel.

"Treasure! What treasure nor' what fiddlesticks!" he shouted, in a voice of thunder. "Thou calumniator! What meanest thou with thy libellous charges? My son a traitor! Wouldst bite the hand that fed thee? Or art thou mad or in the fever of thy wound?"

"Not so, Don Pedro! Your—son—ta—takes ship—this day—f—for Spain, with the—sp—spoils—of the—late—expe—expedition."

"Now I know that thou liest, base, ungrateful hound! *Canalla!* Thou hast sat at my board and turned my favour into license for thy presumption. Here, Lieutenant! Come hither!"

The door opened and the Lieutenant of the guard appeared once more. I saw my hopes of saving the treasure fast vanishing, but knew that the event would justify me and, therefore, I felt no fear for myself, but tried once more to make the Adelantado hear me.

"Distrust me, if you will, your Excellency,—but—ask—these without—if it be—be—not true—what I say!" I cried, anxiously.

"What,—dost thou persist in thine infamy! Know that the blood of de Lugo answereth not such a charge as this by the sword, but by the lash. Here, officer, let the garrison be drawn up at midday upon the plaza and we shall see if he will sustain his charge under the scourge!"

My face grew pale and I felt my heart sink. I,—a knight and a soldier,—to be scourged before the troops! Not while I lived! The shame would slay me ere I felt the blows. I looked at the Governor for some sign of relenting. His stern, dark eye was fixed upon the ground, as he paced nervously up and down the room.

"Your Excellency!" I cried, at last, in despair, "remember that—ti—time—is flying! Whilst you—de—delay—Don Alonzo escapeth."

He turned upon me like a wild beast and caught his sword forth from its scabbard,—then let it fall back again,—and passed his hand across his brow,—spat upon the ground and pointed imperiously to the door, whereupon the Lieutenant drew me hurriedly away.

As we crossed the threshold, I swooned, and knew no more until I found myself lying upon a rude cot in the common jail. By the water running from my face I knew that they had sought to arouse me.

The Lieutenant and one of his men stood over me. Shuddering again, I recalled what had happened. Groaning, as the full consciousness came to me, I buried my head in my hands: then I thought of my four faithful friends and knew that they would not leave me without witnesses. The Lieutenant touched me kindly upon the shoulder: we were brothers-in-arms and had been upon fair terms.

"From my heart thou hast my sympathy, Don Gonzálo. Surely thou art entangled in an adverse fortune. Can I do aught to alleviate thy condition, save giving thee liberty?"

"Ay,—friend,—that thou canst! First give me a basin of water and a towel, that I may remove this unsightly stuff from my face, and then give me a bite to eat, for I have not broken fast since yester morn."

"The first is soon done, but the matter of the food is not to be lightly spoken of. Thine expedition stripped us bare, ere they left, and returned with empty bellies and emptier pockets. However, thou shalt have mine own portion."

"I thank thee kindly, good Simón, and ask but one more favour, and that is that thou wilt give me a moment's speech with my friends," for I meditated telling them of Don Alonzo's project and bidding them go at once to some of the Captains that they might tell the Governor of the existence of the treasure ere it be too late.

"With great pleasure shall I seek thy friends, for I judge that thou meanest the worthy armourer and those others that came with thee to the Governor; although I know not how they can help thee, nor, indeed, precisely of what thou art accused."

"'Tis *lèse majesté* or something of that nature," I replied, with a grim smile, "in that I have charged the Governor's son with appropriation of the spoils of the expedition to himself, and intention to make off with them to Spain."

The soldier whistled and his face took on an expression of profound commiseration.

"Thou hast surely infinite courage to face him with such an accusation, but now mayest thou well summon all thy fortitude for what thou hast to bear, my friend, for I myself heard Don Alonzo declare that ye returned empty-handed, and the Governor is not one to take kindly such charges against his own blood. However, set thy mind at rest! Here cometh the man with the water and the light refection I have for thee, and I shall at once seek out thy comrades, although there is naught that they can do for thee now."

I thanked the warm-hearted fellow most cordially and proceeded to my toilet and my frugal meal. My tongue was fast resuming its usual form although it still pained me mightily, yet I could now converse

more readily and the ablution refreshed me exceedingly.

By the light of the sun at my window I knew that it must be about ten of the clock, so that there was but little time remaining ere I should be dragged forth to my most ignominious and unmerited martyrdom.

I began to feel a new anxiety. What if Don Alonzo should abandon his original project! Then should I be indeed lost! For, having fallen from the good graces of the father, but little mercy need I expect from the son!

I also remembered that my friends as yet knew only of mine incarceration and naught of Don Alonzo's meditated treachery to his father, and 'twould take but a feeble ingenuity to prove that I had been really wounded and bound upon the cot because of the delirium. Thus the moments passed and no one came nigh me.

Through the window I could hear much stir and bustle without, but it was so high above my head that I could see nothing. At last I could bear the suspense no longer and, in spite of my lame and swollen arms, I reached up and caught the bars of the window and drew myself up where I could see what was happening without.

The view took in the harbour and commanded a full sight of the plaza also. Here such troops as could be spared for the ceremony were already being formed in line about the square and the sun was fast approaching the zenith.

My gaze fell upon the ships in the harbour, a sight with which we had all been so long familiar that we knew the name and position of every one of

them that belonged to the Governor, but, after counting them thrice over I could find none of them missing, nor was there any apparent sign of movement on board of them.

Just as my weary arms refused to longer sustain me, I saw the Governor and his staff approaching the centre of the square from the direction of his house. As I dropped back into my prison, the sound of martial music smote upon mine ears and I knew that there was no further hope for me. Presently the door opened and the Lieutenant entered, with mingled pity and sorrow in his face.

"Pardon me, Don Gonzálo, but thou art to be bound. Thy friends seem to be in restraint, for I can get no word of them or their whereabouts. Compel me not to use force! There is no escape for thee and my friendship cannot serve thee."

I stretched forth my hands for him to bind my wrists and he started at seeing how they were bruised and swollen.

"What meaneth this?" he cried, in astonishment, "hast thou been prisoner of the Indians so lately and art escaped only to suffer under the lash?"

"Nay, friend; but prisoner of his Excellency's most worthy son, from whom I did escape to warn the Governor of the treason which he doth meditate."

"Give me thy parole that thou wilt not seek to escape and thou mayst go with thy hands unbound, to the post. For this I have no authority, but will respond with mine own head if need be."

"Thanks, Simón; thou art most gentle with me. But I will give thee my word most surely to escape at the first opportunity, so bind my hands and spare them not. Thinkest thou that I shall walk freely to

such a degradation? Bind me, then, as thy duty bids thee, and let us be off!"

Hereupon two soldiers approached and, stripping me to the waist, bound my naked wrists together with care not to needlessly pain me, and then flung a cloak loosely over my shoulders.

"If I return not, good friend," I said to the Lieutenant, "do me the service to give this shirt of mail, which thy followers have removed, to my friend, Don Diego de Alarcón. As for thyself, take the dagger that is in my girdle. Cast the trinkets that thou wilt find in the breast of my doublet into the fire. Let us not keep these worthy people waiting long to see so pleasant a sight as a soldier of the King scourged unjustly!"

"Now thou dost them a gross injustice," and a tear stood in the brave fellow's eye. "There is not one that doth not deplore thy misfortune, and I make sure the Governor himself would relent could he see a way open, but the thing hath gone too far. But come! we may not longer tarry! For my part, I hope to have no occasion of becoming thine heir in the matter of the dagger, but thanks for the thought. As for the lash, there is order to lay it on as lightly as will satisfy justice."

"'Tis not the weight of the blows that cut into the flesh that I feel, but the weight of shame that cuts into my soul. I have no hope or desire of surviving it. But let us be off!"

The door was immediately flung open and I walked as steadily as I could from the room, betwixt two soldiers. As I appeared at the door and could be seen from without, the drums struck up sharply and, to this music, I crossed the square and was bound

to the post. Here I could no longer see the harbour and the ships, because a small building that was set over the curb of a well to shade it, shut them off from my sight.

An officer read the order for my punishment:—

“Hear! Hear! Whereas, one Gonzálo de Cabrera, Secretary to his Excellency the Governor of his most Catholic Majesty’s Province of Santa Marta, Don Pedro Fernández de Lugo, hath rewarded the favour and kindness of the said Governor and of his son, Don Alonzo Luís de Lugo, by libellously calumniating the person and name of said Alonzo Luís de Lugo, now therefore, because of this hateful and wicked deed and by virtue of the powers vested in him by his Majesty, the Governor doth condemn the said Cabrera to receive one hundred stripes upon the naked flesh of his back, to be degraded from his office, and banished from the City and Province.

“Given in Santa Marta this 26th day of November, 1536, by

“PEDRO FERNÁNDEZ DE LUGO,

“Governor of the Province of Santa Marta.”

While this paper was being read I sought to catch the Governor’s eye but was not able, and I wondered now at his bitterness and severity as before I had wondered at his kindness to me. It appeared that whichever ruled,—ruled in the superlative degree. Yet had the two of us been placed side by side with our backs bared for the lash, I imagine that a stranger would have judged him the guiltier by his face, for it had taken on a look which I had never seen there before, and the man was seemingly sunk in a sort of apathy from which he only roused himself to whisper to a soldier whom he despatched hastily through the town, then he spoke to the Lieutenant who stood near him and this officer left the Governor and drew near to the post to which I was bound.

“He hath sent for his son, who hath not responded to a former summons,” he said, as he

reached me, "but he will not wait longer, so summon all thy fortitude. Here,—executioner! Bring thy lash and make ready to do thy work. See that thou pass not the number set down in the warrant and see that thou fall not short of the same."

I could see the brawny soldier step forward at the command, baring his sinewy arm as he came, and drawing the lashes through his fingers to measure their weight and length. In a moment the man was behind me and I could see him no longer. My hands were drawn high above my head and fastened with the cord through a hole in the post. The midday sun of the Tropics was already burning the tender skin upon my body, which owed its fairness to mine English blood. My whole soul gathered upon my skin and I thought that the first blow that fell would part it from my body. I drew myself together for the falling of the great shame which should rive them asunder. I heard the whistling of the lash as it fell, but I felt it not. Instead, I felt a soft warm body upon my naked back and two lithe arms about my neck, and I heard a groan like that of a wounded animal as the blow of the lash fell upon the tender flesh, then, suddenly, my poor wounded wrists felt a great strain as the arms tightened and the weight hung from my shoulders, after which the arms suddenly relaxed and I heard a soft body fall upon the ground behind me at my feet.

For a moment all was confusion. The Lieutenant stepped forward and raised the body from the ground: several men sprang from the ranks, and the Governor himself left his place and started toward us. At this moment I saw Captain Sanmartín touch Don Pedro's arm and point to the harbour, and the

Governor paused and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"What meaneth this?" I heard him cry, "my best and swiftest ship leaving without orders or clearance. Haste! Call my son and bid him make speed to ascertain the reason for this strange proceeding!"

At this the Captain whispered to him, and I saw him start in anger and lay his hand upon his sword as he had done when I spoke to him.

"What! Thou also! Who next will dare to accuse my blood of such foul treachery?"

Upon this, a number of the Captains approached, and I could see that they now undertook to reason with the infuriated old man, who for a time would not hear them, but cursed and swore in a manner most dreadful and pitiful, and beat upon his breast, looking first at the ship, then at me, and then upon the ground. At last he cast himself into his great chair that stood nigh him and let his head fall upon his breast.

Thus he remained for several moments, whilst I bethought me of my saviour and twisted my head to see who had suffered in my stead; for by this time I understood that the blow had fallen upon another.

I saw Olahla lying upon the sand, with a cruel purple stripe across her back, for they had lifted her mantle from the wounded flesh and were washing from it the blood that oozed in places from the livid welt. Upon her naked shoulder I saw again the figure of the blue frog. At this moment her eyes opened and she saw me. A smile crossed her pleasant face as she caught mine eye, and then a look of agony as the pain increased, and she moaned and closed her eyes.

"Cut down that man!" cried a stern though

broken voice. The Governor had arisen and advanced to my side. "Let us see justice done though the knife enter mine own heart!" At that moment I saw that his eyes had fallen upon the ring which had been my father's and, afterwards, my mother's, and which I wore upon my finger. His glance faltered and his face paled, but he turned to the officers standing by him. "Here,—Captain! let the people man one of the swift rowing galleys at once and take after yonder ship! See that thou have armed men with thee! Bring all on board prisoners! Gonzálo, already do I repent me of my haste. Those eyes of thine do pierce my heart. Be off to thine abode upon thy parole to hold thyself at my command!"

"I do most joyously give it, your Excellency, knowing that I am innocent of that with which I am charged."

"Well, well,—we shall see. We shall see. Meanwhile, see that that maid is cared for. I knew not that thou hadst a sweetheart in the camp."

"'Tis but an Indian maid whose life I saved the other day, Don Pedro, and who in gratitude refuses to leave me. I knew not that she was in Santa Marta."

"Thou hast to thank her for a whole back, and so thy score is paid. The life of a savage against a stroke like that leaves thee in debt to the girl." The Governor smiled bitterly at his own humour and turned away. Bravely he sought to conceal the anguish that was gnawing at his heart, yet he eagerly sought that knowledge which might confirm his wretched forebodings.

Leaving him with his painful thoughts, I had

Olahla carried to the house, where I found my friends but just arrived, and I may as well tell at once the rest of the story.

No sooner had I escaped from the house of Don Alonzo than mine absence was discovered, and Saucedo made haste to the Governor's to spy upon mine actions, knowing that I would naturally seek that place at once. There he managed to hear all of mine adventure and its result, and hurried at once to Don Alonzo and set his mind at rest, so that he proceeded at once with his project, first, however, giving orders to despatch my four friends to the defences of the City and detain them there until mid-day. He had even had the assurance to call upon his father and strengthen him in his suspicions of myself.

Upon reaching the house, we made the girl as comfortable as we could, and then set to work to have something to satisfy our inward cravings. For this we were better provided than even the Governor himself, because there still remained somewhat of that which Olahla had brought in the basket.

As we ate we talked and I gave them the sum of the story in small change, but noticed not that the girl had disappeared until, suddenly, she stood at my side with a bunch of fresh leaves, some of which she bound upon my wrists, and then made signs to me to bind the rest upon her back. Divining her intention, I at once complied with her desire, whereat she seemed presently to be relieved of the pain and soreness of the wound and fell to and served us as we ate, and, as for me, I well-nigh forgot that I had been wounded, so quickly was I healed.

"Thou hast a treasure, lad, in the girl," said the

armourer, as I finished mine office of leech; "had she not told us where thou wast, thou hadst been there yet. It seems she caught some distant sight of thee when Don Alonzo unveiled thy face for the Governor, and so she followed thee persistently to his house."

"For the matter of that, her devotion hath been of but little avail, for the General is now off with the treasure and little likely to be caught, whilst she hath received this stroke upon her back and I have all but died of shame."

At this moment came a summons to me from the Governor, and I went again to the plaza, where I found the garrison still drawn up in arms, awaiting the pleasure of the Adelantado. Don Pedro himself occupied his former position and motioned to me with his hand to approach him, which I did, and then waited for him to speak. As he looked at me, I fancied he was greatly moved with other feeling than shame for his son; but, after he had regarded me for a moment steadily, he said:

"Gonzálo,—thou knowest a father's heart. Thou knowest how I loved him who was my son, for I shall call him so no longer. I have done thee a grievous wrong. I shall not ask thee to forgive the wrong: it is much to ask,—but I shall do thee what justice I can.

"Relate to me what thou knowest of this treason, for I have learned from many witnesses both of the existence of the treasure and of the presence of Don Alonzo on yonder ship which is flying before my galley, and will escape if the wind fail it not."

I told the sorrowing but brave old man the whole shameful history in as few words as possible, and

then he stepped forward and spoke to the officers and the troops:

"*Caballeros* and soldiers mine;—I have but now sought shamefully to persecute this valiant and noble officer who hath not spared himself in my behalf, and in your behalf.

"He knoweth now that it was because I thought the blood of de Lugo had no taint of baseness,"—here the old man's voice broke, and then recovered itself—"I know now that I was deceived and that he who was my son hath betrayed us all, and made off with all the spoil of the late expedition.

"If he fall into my hands, death shall be his portion, and I have already ordered the preparation of my second fastest ship to follow him to Spain and demand his head of my sovereign liege.

"Concerning that of which he hath robbed us, I pledge my word to make it good from my share of future spoils, if there be sufficient. As for this gentleman, my Secretary, I do most earnestly crave his pardon for the wrong which I have done him, and commend him heartily to your respect and confidence."

At the sound of these words I sprang forward and caught his hand, raising it to my lips; but he strained me to his breast and a shout went up from all the soldiers, who loved the old man, not only because of his interest in their welfare, but for the sternness of his discipline.

The Governor was even as good as his word and, two hours before the sun had set, the second swiftest ship in the harbour was under all sail in pursuit of Don Alonzo, with Captain Diego López de Haro, and other officers and soldiers, and bearing letters

from the Governor to the Emperor asking his son's head, because of the affront which he had put upon his father and all the rest of us, as well as upon his Majesty himself.

With the second ship went also my share in the spoils we had gathered on that foray which was made the day before the arrival of Don Pedro at Santa Marta, for I thought it safer with my banker at Málaga, and therefore shipped it to his correspondent at San Lúcar.

Weary and sore with all that had befallen me, I slept late the next day, and was finally awakened by an altercation at the outer door.

"I say thou canst not see him!" came, in the voice of Juan Gordo, from without.

"And I say that I shall see him, old man!" was the sneering reply. "Am I to be robbed of mine own?"

"Hoity-toity! Talk not of robbery or thou wilt have another score to settle, I ween," replied the old man, shortly. "Be off and return at a more seasonable hour! It cannot always be day nor always night."

"Seasonable? By my casque! What hour dost thou call seasonable? The sun is at the zenith!"

"Well, well,—leave the sun there then and be off with thy pigs to a better market. Be off, I say, and give us peace!"

All this while I had been turning over in my head who the fellow might be and what he might want; but now, of a sudden, it dawned upon me that he must be none other than that wretch who would have misused Olahla, and I recollected the compact between us. Springing to my feet, I stepped to the

door and bade the man enter and await me. A dash of cold water opened mine eyes and, to my surprise, the Indian girl's medicaments had relieved me of all pain in my wrists; so I went out and bade the soldier state his grievance in as few words as he might.

"And a grievance I certainly have, as I made bold to explain already to the old man at the door. Your Worship hath the maid, and what have I?"

"A clean conscience, I trust."

The fellow laughed a surly laugh at my wit. "Ay, and a clean pocket and an empty belly as well," he added, lugubriously. "What doth your Worship propose to do for me?"

"Do for thee? Exchange vouchers with thee, if thou canst write. If not,—show thee the outside of the door."

"For what am I to give you the voucher?" asked the fellow, somewhat bewildered, for he did not altogether follow my meaning.

"For my share of the spoil, according to the compact," I replied, laughing. Still he did not follow me.

"How may we come to a reckoning, since the Governor's son is gone with it all, and none knows what the sum total was?"

"How, indeed?" I asked, ironically.

"I have been thinking upon the matter," persisted the rogue, blindly, "and shall be satisfied with five hundred pesos in gold."

"Thou art easily satisfied. I find the sum small."

The fellow's face, which had begun to wear a somewhat dubious expression, brightened at this.

"Let your Honour name the price then," he exclaimed, with a sudden burst of confidence.

"Oh,—Juan Gordo, good friend: fetch me Diego and the others, if they be at hand!"

The old man went out and shortly returned with the rest.

"Tell me," I said, when they were come in, "what were the terms of the compact made with this *individual*, in regard to the transfer of his claim and title to the Indian girl?"

Diego looked from one to the other of us and then responded, gravely, as though he took it as a matter of course that he was to speak first:

"The—person was to receive all the share of the spoils of the village where the girl was found, which you might thereafter receive. Am I right?" and he looked enquiringly at the others, who responded with an inclination of the head.

"See, fellow! The witnesses are unanimous. I have received nothing as yet. Hence thou receivest likewise—nothing. We are quits. However, that thou mayst drown thy grief, here is a portrait of the Emperor for thee," and I tossed him a coin of gold that I had with me remaining of the sum I had kept in my possession on leaving Spain.

"Curse thy money! To another dog with that bone!" exclaimed Malatesta, rising angrily to his feet and flinging the coin upon the floor; then, striding across the room ere I could stop him, he seized the girl by the arm in his rough grasp, for she had entered the room whilst we were talking. "Dost thou think I do not know how many make four? The girl is mine," he cried, with ferocious exultation. "Claim her before the Governor! He will see justice done!"

"My friend,—he who shuffles is not he who cuts,

and from say to do is a long journey. I care not much to exert myself ere I have broken my fast, but, upon occasion, and as it is somewhat late in the day—— Unhand that girl!" I thundered, changing my tone at sight of the pain and terror in Olahla's face. "Unhand that girl, if thou wouldst live a little moment," I repeated, as he hesitated, but kept his hold upon her. With the spring of a tiger I was across the floor, and had seized him by the neck with one hand. With a great gasp for breath he loosed his hold, and I caught him by the top of his leathern breeches behind and flung him through the door that Molina thrust open for me with his foot.

Nevertheless, though the fellow never saw a cross of my money, the account was not yet squared.

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT EXPEDITION

OFTEN I must think that this same City of Santa Marta hath been favoured with most exceeding ill-fortune above that of other cities of these provinces, for her Governors have met violent deaths; many great fires have visited her; pirates and corsairs have plundered her; the native tribes have repeatedly besieged her; great famines and plagues have fallen upon her, and, finally, after this misfortune that befell her through Don Alonzo, there came such a visitation of pestilent fevers as to despatch for the other world, in short order, all those who had been wounded in the forays or the defence of the City, so that they were buried by fifteens and twenties in the same grave or trench, and the bells of the City had to be silenced, because they were continually kept ringing with the passing of so many, and served to dishearten those who remained.

As for me, I resumed my former relation to the Governor, who was much broken in health after his son's departure. Olahla lived with the Indian woman who cooked for us, although she came and went about the house as she pleased, and frequently left the City for the forest, returning always with a supply of food of some sort, which kept us in better condition than the rest.

As she always came by night, we said nothing to the others, but shared our good fortune with some,

when we could, although we could not hope to feed the City in this way.

Little by little the girl gathered words of our language, at which business she was most astonishingly quick. No persuasion could induce her to leave us, so, after a time, I gave over urging her.

Thus things went from bad to worse with the City, as I have said, and there remained at last but two things which might be done, either to abandon the Province, or to attempt another foray.

But few were inclined to favour the first, least of all the Adelantado, who was now ruined in purse and bereft of wife and son, but whose proud spirit nothing but Death could overcome. Consequently, only the second course was to be considered, and to this end the Governor called a council of his chief Captains and laid the matter before them.

As the will of the Governor was in perfect accord with the desires of each member of the Council, but little argument was necessary, and it was only required to settle the route which they should take and the names and number of those who should go. Here was a great difference of opinion, and I fear they might all have been carried away by the pestilence ere they resolved the question had not help come from a source on which no one had counted.

To make short of a long matter, for I must hasten to events of more interest although not of more importance, when we had concluded our Council meeting on the second day, we five friends, together with our host and comrade, sat about the long table and threshed over the old straw which had already passed under the flails of the Council. Olahla glided in

and out and busied herself about her own affairs or in our service.

Suddenly she paused near me and asked, "Yellow Hair go away?"

"Yes," I answered, "I hope we all go together."

"Where go?"

"I know not, girl,—we talk, talk, talk, but cannot find way."

"What for go?"

"Find food: find gold."

"Find food—very good. What for want gold?"

"Ah, that is hard to say, my good girl. Gold very good for Spaniard."

She shook her head doubtfully, then asked, "You come here in great canoe get food or get gold?"

We all laughed. "Why, as to that, we should be poor fools, indeed, to leave sunny Spain to hunt food on these inhospitable shores. No, no! There is food enough and to spare at home. It is the gold we want, more than all."

"Me no sabee that before. How you know gold here? Who tell you come here get gold?"

"Well, that is a rather long story, but here we are and we want both food and gold."

At this the girl appeared to study for a time; then she brightened up and commenced to talk as rapidly as she could in her quaint and broken Spanish:

"I tell you something, Yellow Hair. You very good. Me your slave. You sabee me no live here. This not my peoples. Me live many, many days this way," pointing inland, to the south. "My peoples hab heap gold, heap green stone, heap food! More beyond my peoples there other peoples fight my peo-

ples. Heap gold where this other peoples! Heap green stone! Heap food! I no like them! They take Olahla,—sell Olahla to this peoples here.

"Yellow Hair,—you take musket,—take horse,—tell Chief, all go to this other peoples get gold, get stones, get food. There one big cacique, big chief. He paint himself all gold, then wash in water, then all hims peoples trow green stones in water. You go get him!"

"Well, this is a likely story, indeed," said Juan Gordo. "When we sailed with the Great Admiral 'twas ever thus. These Indians had always great tales to tell of treasures a long way off, but, as fast as we approached, they took wings to themselves and went farther off."

"It may well be. It may well be," replied Molina, reflectively. "Yet, now that I bethink me, I remember to have heard tell of this same Dorado, although never to have heard two tales alike. Tell me, girl, hast thou seen this gilded king?"

"Yes, yes," answered the Indian, smiling, "have seen. Have seen. Him all same sun. All gold,—shine all over so," exhibiting my glistening helmet at which she had been at work and over which she was forever quarrelling with my servant, Ali.

"What's that!" shouted the astounded Molina, springing to his feet and seizing the girl by the shoulder with his hard hand. "Say that again! You say you saw the Dorado yourself, girl? With your own eyes? Take us to him!"

Olahla shrank back and put her hand to the offended shoulder, saying, "What for hurt Olahla?"

Molina dropped into his chair sighing, and all the rest of us chorused him.

"I crave thy pardon, girl," he exclaimed, penitently, "I meant not to hold thee so tight, but this news of thine hath overcome me."

Now, for the first time, Diego spoke. "This news would best be borne to the Governor this very night an thou hast not scared the road from the girl's memory by thy great grip, *Pedro de mi alma*."

To this we all agreed and took the girl with us at once to the Governor's house, where we laid before him all that we had learned. Having questioned the girl closely, without eliciting any very definite information beyond that which we had already received, he dismissed us and left the matter for the Council to settle upon the morrow.

By this time the soldiers of the Province were well acquainted with all that country which lies to the north of the Sierra de Santa Marta, as well as the southern slopes of these mountains, and from thence to the Great River, the River Magdalena.

Now it was apparent to all that with the girl's story, added to those rumours which had come to us, not only from the neighbouring province of Cartagena, but, more particularly, from those Indians with which we ourselves had come in contact, there was sufficient reason to believe that certain nations rich in gold and precious stones dwelt far to the south in the direction towards the headwaters of the Great River; and, although many of the soldiers had been much afflicted with fevers in those lands which lay near the Magdalena, yet they were not afraid to venture there again, as they were not likely to be worse off than was the City itself at that moment.

The Governor at once set to work to make ready all things for the expedition and, by his command,

six brigantines and a barge were built to convey that part of the company which should ascend the Great River.

There were still left in the City by the war and the pestilence about a thousand men capable of bearing arms, and from these the Governor selected eight hundred that were in the best condition for the journey. When all was in readiness, Don Pedro named the Licentiate, Gonzálo Jiménez de Quesada as first in authority, in order that the Captains might not be made jealous by the choice of any one of them.

Other officers were duly appointed and, full of faith and hope, our land force set forth from Santa Marta on April sixth, accompanied by the good friar Domingo de las Casas, of the Order of Saint Dominick, and the priest, Antón de Lesgámez.

Good Friar Domingo was a sight to heal distemper of the eyes. Such a mountain of a man have I never seen, for his weight was more than fourteen arrobas and his height and girth enormous. In spite of his size, there was naught that was loose and flabby about him, for his great mass of flesh was hard as a well-cured ham. His hard round head was covered with a thick, bristling crop of jet-black hair and so vigorous was his beard that an hour after shaving his chin seemed as unkempt and slovenly as most men's fortnight growth. His eye was honest and his humour keen: his heart was large as the man himself and when he exerted himself under the tropic sun he sweat mightily withal.

The other was none of this sort at all, but was sleek, sly, and silent. He made no noise when he moved, but was wont to leave more perturbation and tumult behind him than the great mass of a man,

his colleague. His eye was cold and hard and his thin lips pressed close together like the dint of a sword-stroke on a corselet. In time of plague he was as quick to succour as the other, but, methinks, they that died, died the easier for the ministrations of the burly friar, although 'tis like as not the one were as efficacious as the other and neither more nor less, for each man that is properly started on his last journey must take what is coming to him of Purgatory pain, save what is shifted off him by the virtue of the Mass.

These were they who would console us in life or death, upon our expedition up the Great River!

When I came to bid the Governor farewell, he clasped me in his arms and bade me Godspeed. I left him much moved, but he called me back again and made as though he would speak, then stopped, and said, "No matter,—no matter! We shall, perhaps, meet again. If not, I shall leave thee a letter."

At this I wondered greatly what matters he could have to write about that he could not tell me then, but I said nothing, and straightway took my departure.

After we had been on the road a few days some of us made a foray and entered three small villages where we found no Indians but some considerable quantity of food which we knew not how to transport to our friends, but, as we thought upon the matter, we were saved a solution by the natives, who set upon us and gave us a fierce battle, in which my servant was slain, but in exchange we took many prisoners who served us as carriers for the food we had taken, but the General set them all free again when they had served their purpose save one old man

to act as a guide for the party, as it was necessary to make all possible haste because of the near approach of the rains and the rising of the waters in the marshes and streams.

As is well known, there lieth between Santa Marta and the Great River an immense swamp or morass into which empty many small streams and rivers and, by the swelling of these streams, the waters arise in the morass or Cienaga, as they call it, so that, as this began to take place, it drove us back into the hills in order to fetch a compass and go about it, as was our intention.

Had we had that knowledge which cometh only by bitter experience we had not set out on such an adventure at the beginning of the rainy season, but, once started on our way, we neither dared nor were able to turn back, and must needs press on over a route which hath never since been followed nor never will be again by men and horses in heavy armour, breaking a new road through the virgin forest; for, of all the notable deeds which the Spaniards have done in this New World, I take it, there hath been none other so heroic and worthy of renown.

Our sufferings were due to many causes. The luxuriant and well-nigh impassable primeval growth of the Tropics encumbered the entire line of march, and it was necessary to literally hew our way with sword and axe and knife through the interminable and intricate network of jungle and creepers, with the vertical sun of the Equator beating upon our unaccustomed heads whenever we by chance passed into some open glade, and subject always to an incessant martyrdom from the dense cloud of mosquitos, which make their homes in the thick shades of the forest.

Many times our daily advance was no more than a scant league, while the thick and thorny brush tore our clothing into rags, thus exposing us still more to every kind of insect plague, and often sparing not the flesh itself.

At every step we encountered reptiles of all descriptions, snakes and poisonous lizards, scorpions and centipedes, and, at night, the multiplied clouds of mosquitos gave us not a moment's repose, while it was perforce necessary to keep constant guard against the tigers in the forest and the numerous caymans which basked in vast numbers on the banks of the streams.

Yet this was not all our misery, for scarcely a foot of the way but was occupied by one or another tribe of ants of many poisonous species, which would cover our entire bodies in an instant, when we trod upon their nests, and bring blood with every bite.

Our food oft consisted only of fruits and roots of the forest, which were the frequent cause of unknown and terrible maladies, for which we had no remedies. Many stragglers became a prey to the tigers and many fed the caymans when we passed the streams and lagoons on our way, while many were drowned by the sudden rising of the waters, due to the terrible storms which burst upon us.

Some were mired in the swamps and sank to rest unaided by their miserable companions, who were staggering along on limbs emaciated by hunger and enfeebled by the terrible fevers which are born of the noisome and fetid exhalations from the numberless pools of stagnant black water which abound on the borders of the great Cienaga.

None can imagine the grim terror of the forest,

save those who have stood alone in its dank obscurity and gazed into the lofty and intermingled masses of the trees, covered with vines, plants, and moss and hanging in festoons with great lianas. Every leaf conceals an insect of dangerous or deadly power; every bush an enemy, and the dread silence over all, only relieved by the constant hum of insects or the shrill cry of a parrot or macaw in the tree-tops.

Our General's constant desire was to win the friendship and confidence of the Indians, that thus he might minimize our perils. He spared no pains to accomplish this end, but those who had come before him to the New World had forever rendered this impossible through their cruel oppressions and, because of this, we were continually subject to attacks of all kinds, whenever we approached their settlements, especially with the little poisoned darts or arrows which they blow with deadly aim through a long reed or tube some three varas in length. As little as the slightest scratch of one of these arrows was always fatal. 'Tis said they extract this singularly venomous matter from small warts on the back of certain toads or frogs which are known to them.

To add to our labours, we were oft obliged to follow the banks of the streams for long distances in search of a ford and, even then, perchance, build rafts and ferry our horses and men over on them.

In spite of our haste and the skill of the old man who guided us, the spreading of the waters drove us well back into the foothills, where we opened a new road through the jungles and ravines, finally reaching a sizeable river called the Arignón, the ford of which we could not find, but were obliged to pass

it by means of a rope which we made of the hammocks and other cords which we had with us, and then swam ourselves and our horses across with this aid.

In this crossing we lost a large part of our store of provisions of which we stood in sore need a little later, but our General was anxious to make a junction with the fleet at Sompallón, about one hundred leagues above the mouth of the Great River, as had been agreed, in order that he might put our sick and wounded aboard.

Pushing our way forward as rapidly as possible, with the General always in advance, as was his custom, for although by rights a man of letters, there was none amongst us all more valiant than he, of a sudden there burst a wild yell from the neighbouring thicket and a naked savage, bearing a long lance, sprang from the bushes and, running toward him, thrust at him with all his might, finding by chance a joint of his harness, so that the lance entered his side. With a groan, he fell from his horse, crying out: "God rest us! We are slain!"

In an instant all was confusion and, ere we knew it, his assailant had plunged into the forest and disappeared, leaving his lance upon the ground beside Quesada, who had swooned from the pain of his wound and the sudden shock.

Now were we put to it to know what to do for him and already we reckoned him dead, for there was not one amongst us who knew enough of the surgeon's art to do for such a wound as that, and especially in a climate where a scratch will send a man to the worms betwixt two suns.

Knowing naught else to do, we sought to staunch

the bleeding, but found that almost no blood was issuing from the wound, although the hole was large enough to hold two of my great fingers.

Finding, therefore, that the General must be bleeding inwardly, we gave him over to the priest to shrive him and laid him upon a pile of soft leaves that he might find what comfort he could in the passing. Hereupon Pedro de Molina drew nigh to the group of Captains who had gathered about their fallen chief in mournful expectancy of the end, which was soon to come.

"May it please your Worships, and is all hope gone?" he asked. The Captains nodded gravely in reply.

"There is a cure for all things except death, but, as for myself, I should not count it worth while to hunt the remedy; nevertheless, as it is not myself but the General who is to be cured, and we can but ill spare him, begging your Worships' pardon, who could doubtless bring us safe through; I take it upon me to say that I have seen a similar case cured when I was with Ponce de León in Florida—God give him rest!—if the wound be not mortal."

"Ay,—that's the rub,—if it be not mortal! How may we come to know that?"

"Well,—as for that, who shall say what lieth upon the other side of a wall, although there be ways of coming to the knowledge by a train of reasoning founded upon logic."

"*Caramba!* The fellow reasoneth as though he had been cassoched at Salamanca," quoth Captain Suárez, astonished.

"A bad cloak often covers a good drinker," replied Pedro, with a smirk of gratified vanity at the

doubtful compliment. "I make no claim to knowledge nor to much experience, your Worships, yet I am an old campaigner and was not born yesterday. An ass loaded with books is not a scholar. I have seen service, may it please you, and go not beyond what I have seen. What I dare affirm is, that I will make shift to come at the nature of the wound, if I have license?"

The Captains conferred together for a moment what would be best to do, and Diego vouched for Molina's sobriety and good judgment.

Suddenly a voice as from the ground or grave fell upon our ears and startled us all sorely.

"Let the fellow do what he can, an it be no jest," it faintly said. Quesada had recovered from his swoon and was gazing at us with hollow eyes, set in a face drawn with pain.

"I jest not with Death," replied Pedro, grimly. "Fetch me that same old Indian, our guide, and strip me the General as gently as may be."

Quickly we obeyed him, in full wonder what he would do.

"Doubtful hopes should make men bold, but not rash," he murmured, "but nothing risked, nothing won. Put the savage in the General's doublet!"

At this strange command we stopped what we were doing and would have laughed had not the business been so sinister.

"Tarry not to wonder at the treatment, friends," objected Molina, "for delay breeds danger and there is enough of that to bid us run no risks. Do as I say, be the work crowned with laurel or cypress."

With this evidence of the surgeon's sanity, we all fell to and quickly clothed the astonished native in

the garments which we had taken from the General, who calmly regarded our every movement but attempted not to speak again. At Molina's word we then set the blindfolded man upon the General's horse and made him sit erect like its master.

When this was done, Molina, who had been examining the point of the lance, bound upon it a bit of cotton at the place where the blood had marked its penetration in the wound, and, bidding us lead the General's horse to the exact spot where he had been stricken, he stepped aside into the forest, leaving us to think that he had certainly gone mad and was resolved to act this pantomime to avenge the General's death upon our poor guide.

Whilst we stared and wondered, Molina issued forth from the forest at the point where we had seen the Indian come forth and, walking directly toward the masquerading captive, that he might have the direction aright, he felt with the point of the lance for the hole in the General's doublet and thrust it in until it came to the cotton cloth which was bound upon it, when he jerked it forth ere the old man could fall from the horse, which he did straightway.

Not yet had we caught so much as a glimpse of his intention, but at his command we bound the wounded man and stretched him upon the ground.

"To-day for you and to-morrow for me," quoth the surgeon, and whipped out his keen knife.

In an instant he had laid back the hide from the wound as one who had skill in flaying, and was opening the cavity beneath the ribs. "Bid the Indian girl bring her leaves, Don Gonzálo." He jerked the words past the knife, which he held between his teeth, his fingers being occupied.

Olahla had already slipped away to find them for the General, and I saw her coming not far off with a bunch in her hands. Beginning to see light at last upon our surgeon's madness and that he was no doctor of so much a dozen, we awaited his verdict with anxiety.

"Men are not scholars at their birth," he murmured, "I feel no hole in his entrails. Let us see what lieth to the north of them," and he felt about again and squinted into the hole as well as he was able. "There is a bleeding here that cometh from the outside wall of the fortress that hath been breached. Doubtless the sensation savoureth not of the agreeable, but I come upon no lesion which must needs prove fatal. Methinks there is still sunshine upon the wall. Let us bind up this mummy which hath served us so well. Here, girl, give me the leaves and bring water!"

In a moment we had for him what he required, and he washed the wound and dressed it with the leaves. Turning then to the General, he said:

"Your Excellency, I find no cause to fear. If the wound be left uncleansed, you will die in a few hours. An you give me leave, I will do for you what I have done for this savage."

The General's eyes fixed themselves calmly and steadily upon the soldier and, after a moment's reflection, he bowed his head in token of assent.

Without an instant of hesitation, the veteran fell upon his knees and, having washed the wound, quickly slit it open and rinsed out great clots of blood that had gathered in the cavity and would shortly have caused mortification and death. The General set his

teeth together and suffered not so much as a groan to escape him.

With the leaves Pedro made a dressing and bound it in place with a strip of cotton torn from a mantle.

Three days we tarried at the place and, as the General showed no fever and the wound had commenced to heal, he bade us take him up in a hammock and go on, as he was desirous of reaching the Great River at the earliest possible moment.

As for the Indian, he died the day after his curing, which goes to show that one man's meat is fatal to another, or else that age cannot make shift to throw off a humour as can the greenness of youth.

Be that as it may, we lost our way because our guide was gone the way of all flesh and could no longer show us on our earthly pilgrimage, and for twelve days we made but little progress; then, coming upon some natives, they led us shortly to the town of Tamalameque, which was really the name of the chief rather than of the town.

From this place we went on to the village of Som-pallón, where we arrived finally, in most lamentable condition.

All these miseries we had endured cheerfully to avoid greater, but, being without food, we had well-nigh also parted with our courage at last, for with a full belly all troubles are of but little moment, but in the pangs and faintness of hunger small matters become great.

There being no news of the flotilla, the General sent Captain Sanmartín with a company down the Magdalena, along the bank, to meet them and give them news of our whereabouts, and he at last found them proceeding slowly and doubtfully, because they

hardly knew whether to advance or return, and were much annoyed by the Indians. Seeing our people on the shore, however, they immediately took them on board and made all sail up the river to Sompallón.

Six brigantines and the caravel had left Santa Marta six days after the departure of the troops, on Ash Wednesday, and that same night had come to anchor nigh to land at a point called Los Diques: the next day, Thursday, before daybreak, they continued their journey to the mouth of the river. Captain Urbina, however, against the wishes and opinion of all, sought to enter by the mouth of the river which is nighest to Santa Marta, whereupon they were all caught in a whirlpool, and the caravel went to the bottom with all on board.

One of the brigantines was driven through the mouth of the river upon the coast near Cartagena, where all on board were slain as they came out of the water, by the savage Caribs.

Another brigantine, in which was Urbina, came upon the coast nearer to Cartagena, in the night, and, by making their way in great haste along the beach, they managed to reach the City ere the Indians were able to come up with them. Two other brigantines reached Cartagena in safety without loss of their people.

The last two brigantines passed the mouth of the river and reached Malambo, from whence they sent word to the Governor and asked for instructions and assistance.

As for those who remained in Cartagena, Urbina, being ashamed of what his folly had brought upon them and, perhaps, fearing to be held accountable, took with him Don Diego de Cardona and sailed to

Panamá and thence to Peru, while Captains Velasco, Manjarrés, and Cardoso left their ships in Cartagena and took passage in a caravel that was going to Santa Marta, thus bringing the news to the Governor, upon which the brave old man, not cast down by the misfortune, but thinking only what might be the fate of the land force with the rainy season upon them and unable on this account to either proceed or return without the help of the ships, set about doing what he could to repair the loss.

With two small brigantines, which had not been sent with the others on account of their condition, and another that arrived from Cartagena, the Governor sent such men as he could muster, and these three ships safely returned and entered the river under command of Juan Gallegos, and joined themselves to those that were still waiting at Malambo.

The total number lost in the ships were two hundred men, and all owing to the folly of Captain Urbina.

The people at Malambo were greatly rejoiced to see the reinforcements and all five ships set sail at once up the Great River to make a junction with our force, being obliged to act in everything with extreme caution, because of the efforts made by the Indians to oppose their progress.

The Great River, being over a league in width at this point, they found themselves at times surrounded with from one to two thousand canoes, all filled with hostile savages, well armed with poisoned arrows and other weapons, but, because of the fashion of these frail barks, made as they were of single, hollowed trunks, it was easy to repel them; for it was only with the greatest difficulty that they could main-

tain the equilibrium of their craft upon the swift waters of the river and a shot or two at any time would scatter them immediately.

At last they reached us at Sompallón and I well remember how exceedingly refreshing was the sight of the little fleet as it swept slowly up the broad and turbid stream under full sail and with a favouring wind.

Olahla brought us the news of their approach, which she had learned from the friendly Indians to whom a messenger had come in a swift canoe from a village down the stream. So she sprang in upon us with the message: "Great canoe come!"

At this we all sprang to our feet and ran to look out upon the river. There was nothing visible, and, at sight of our looks of disgust and disappointment, she added, maliciously, "No can see! No got eye like Olahla!"

"Tut, girl," I exclaimed, "'tis but a hoax. There are no ships in sight."

"No, no! I tell you true. Ship come,—one, two, three, five," holding up the fingers of her hand, outspread.

"Five! Then two are lost or have remained behind. But how know you, girl?"

Again she laughed and would not tell us, choosing to mystify us for the moment, but soon the news was all over the camp and we learned its true source.

About midday the brigantines came in sight and, presently, anchored off the shore and then only we learned of the misfortune that had befallen the others.

Soon all was bustle and confusion. Provisions were hurried from the vessels and our sick and

wounded were got on board, that they might have the fresh breeze from the river to give them courage and strength, and it was but a little time before most of them began to mend.

Because of the depth of the water and the abruptness of the shore the ships could approach and be moored to the trees by ropes. That one which had come from Cartagena lay above the other four and to her Diego and I presently turned our steps. As we came upon the planks that crossed to the ship, there stepped upon the other extremity thereof, a young gentleman of most imposing air and presence, clad in what was most extraordinarily rare amongst us now, in spite of all the gewgaws and fine feathers which had come with us from Spain; silken hose covered his well-formed limbs and terminated above in velvet slashed with crimson satin, and fine leather boots below. His doublet was of blue velvet and gold, and the hilt of his slender sword nicely jewelled. The figure was well-knit and vigorous; the face handsome, but not altogether pleasing, and his manner easy and arrogant at the same time.

The stranger stepped forward with an air of easy gallantry and extended both arms to my companion.

"Do mine eyes deceive me, or is this indeed my very good and ancient friend, Diego de Alarcón? Permit me to embrace thee once more as of old."

"Thine eyes do not deceive thee, Ramón Manrique, but I need to know none of thy lineage, nor dost thou need to know me. Stand aside that we may cross!"

I saw that look upon the bronzed pallor of Diego's face which kept the common herd from dropping the *don* from his name in familiar discourse.

An ugly look flashed from the stranger's eyes. "Captain Manrique, an it please you," he said, and smiled a false smile, "and as to lineage, there be but two in this world, I take it,—the *haves* and the *have-nots*."

"Here, Gonzálo, let us move on," was Diego's only reply, and we entered the ship and left him standing there.

When we returned he had disappeared. Turning to one whom he had known in Santa Marta, and who was just come in this ship, Don Diego asked him whence had come the scented exquisite whom we had but now seen.

"Oh, ay, 'tis true he smelleth of sundry cosmetics like a maid-in-waiting to the Governor's lady, and a soldier would better smell of powder than of musk, yet his arm can lay on with that same slender blade that he hath or with another which hath greater weight. He is no child in warfare, nor doth he look it when he hath once laid aside this dainty frippery to put on his jacket and plates of steel. I have seen him hew his way out of a mountain of the naked savages that swarmed upon him, without drawing a quick breath."

"I know him well. He hath not a coward drop in his veins, but how came he here with the ships? He was not with us in the City ere we left."

"He is but lately come from Spain, and by way of Cartagena in this same ship. Because of connections at Court, the Governor hath given him command of a company."

"I am beholden to thee for this notice of him. 'Tis likely he may see service here to satisfy the most exigent," and, shrugging his shoulders, Diego ac-

accompanied me to the shore, a gloomy look upon his face. Already I had divined much but asked no questions, knowing that he would tell me the story when he felt inclined.

When we reached the hut, we sat down to eat what there was and, then as I waited for him to speak, he said simply, "'Tis he!" and relapsed into silence.

Though he had named no name, I knew that my suspicions were confirmed. "So it is thine ancient enemy, turned up in this remote corner of the world?" I exclaimed.

"His very bedizened and charming self. I tell thee, Gonzálo," and he regarded me with flashing eyes, "for the favour that he did me when he meant but evil, I have forgiven him the wrong that he did me, but I well know that he hath not so easily forgiven me the wrong that I have suffered from him. Ay, lad, it is easy to forgive an injury, but hard to forgive him whom we have wronged. Therefore I make bold to say that my fair coz is widowed ere we see the Dorado or else thou remainest destitute of a comrade."

"Not the latter, if the fever spare me, or a poisoned dart find not a joint of my harness."

"Sh, boy! 'Tis not by an honest blow he will strike, although to say truth, we are somewhat equally matched and he is no craven, as thou hast heard; yet his ways are devious, and he can scarcely go straight at any matter. Have I not told thee the whole business? Well,—it is high time thou wert acquaint with the tale. It fell about in this way.

"This Manrique is the son of the majordomo of our family. The father was a man of talent and address. His son and my father's were bred up as

brothers. Ramón's father was but middle-aged when mine was in his dotage, for my father married at fifty years. I was the son of his old age and my mother gave her life for mine. The elder Manrique grew to be my father's necessity, his staff and his mouthpiece. My cousin Inéz was my father's ward. There was always a rivalry as to who should be her squire, but, because of my birth, she always gave me the preference.

"Thou hast seen that Ramón is not ill-favoured but rather such an one as would take the eye of the fair sex. I thought my cousin saw something else in me than the heir, but I was deceived.

"My father died and I thought to succeed him. Inéz and I were betrothed, when, of a sudden, the elder Manrique produced papers by which it appeared that he had advanced monies to my father by virtue of which the whole inheritance was to him hypothecated in twice its value.

"At first I suspected nothing. Then I overheard one day the two, father and son, rehearse the whole ugly affair in a dispute. My father had signed the papers, not knowing what they were. The place was not entailed and I was helpless. Inéz married Ramón and, because of that, I forgive him the rest," and he laughed, bitterly.

"Thou art complaisant," I said, "but what didst thou mean when thou saidst that he owed thee life and all?"

"'Tis true, although a long story. I saved his life when in great jeopardy through a dirty affair in which he became involved, and I covered his guilt in sundry matters by which he made profit from mine own father as well as from a neighbouring noble,

making good his peculations from mine own purse that he might indulge his passion for gaming; and, because he was no coward and hath a winsome way and because, although we were bred together, I knew him not then as I know him now, I loved him as a younger brother, in spite of his faults."

"So he hath done thee out of all thy possessions and now will do thee out of thy life, if he can?"

"Even so, and if ever he hath done any good thing in his life it was while the Devil was rubbing his eyes. But this time I need no warning, nor yet do I fear him."

"'Twould be better to fear him a bit," I suggested, "for he who despiseth his enemy is like to die at his hands."

At this moment the others entered and I made signs to Diego to know if they should be told of the advent of Manrique. To this he replied by acquainting them with the fact, but not with the particulars, and they molested him not with questioning, for he was not one of those in whose patio a neighbour's dog was like to bark.

CHAPTER XI

THE BATTLE WITH THE FOREST

THAT night we banqueted. Such is life:—from chewing the leathers of our steeds we passed to plenty, and from plenty we were soon to come to dire and awful want.

Tables were made ready of hewn planks set upon horses of forked sticks thrust into the ground in the same fashion as we made our beds. There was even a cloth upon the board, at least upon the upper end next to the General, and all about were piles of salt meat and bread from the ships, with yams, yuca and such stuff from the shore, while a goodly array of bottles stopped the gaps, and prayed the company's pardon for what might be lacking in the quality of the victuals.

Ramón Manrique sat at the General's right, as the guest of honour, for the letters that had come with him were of great weight. Diego bowed coldly upon being presented, and I followed suit; nor did we thaw with the wine that passed freely about the board.

"What news of Court, Captain?" asked the General, in a pause of the talk and toast for the success of the expedition. "Had Alonzo de Lugo come amongst you ere you left, and what of the Adelantado's complaint?"

All eyes were turned in lively interest toward the newcomer to hear his response, in which we all had our several interests.

"I saw him not, your Worship, yet I had word of him through others, and this much I know; that the Governor's arraignment came to dull ears."

A murmur of astonishment greeted the news, and the young man continued: "Revenge yourself upon the rich if you can. Though the Devil is said to fly away with ill-gotten gains, yet, so be it that the plunder stick to the thief's fingers, there is hope for his neck."

"Yet can the King wink at the law in this manner?" spoke, hastily, one of the Captains. "Here be a plundered army to witness against him!"

"Nevertheless, laws go on kings' errands, and Don Alonzo standeth high in favour at Court, whilst those who would attaint him are thrust about with cold shoulders."

"At least he hath forfeited the succession," suggested the General, and I fancied that I caught a passing gleam in his eyes.

"*Quién sabe?* Who can say?" replied the young man, laughing. "It looks not like it now, for his sails fill before a fair breeze: there is even talk of his marrying, and I doubt not that the matter hath already been concluded. The lady is Doña Beatriz—Beatriz—the surname I do not recall."

I started slightly and, was it imagination, or did he cast a half-glance my way? Yet why should he do so, knowing neither Alonzo de Lugo nor myself? One often thinks to find bacon where there is not even a peg to hang it on. Manrique resumed, "Yet, now I think upon it, 'tis his fair cousin, Doña Beatriz de la Torre, to whom he hath been long betrothed."

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I was now myself again, and would not let the story of the marriage disturb me, for it had long been current before Alonzo left Spain and was doubtless revived with his return.

"All we ask of the King, provided he care not himself to take the matter in hand, is that he commission Don Alonzo to return to this part of the New World, and the shearer may fall amongst the sheep that have been shorn," suggested Captain Sanmartín, grimly. "We will make shift to wipe out the score on our own account."

"That would be throwing the rope after the bucket, friend: for the money would not be restored, and the revenge would cost you dear. 'Tis ill trifling with the King's messenger, and where is a country that could shield one from his Catholic Majesty's disfavour?"

"Not so, young sir. An army cannot be indicted, nor yet a mob of citizens, nor a rabble of peasants. As for the money, you say truth,—the stone sweats not blood, nor can one fetch it out by squeezing. Beyond doubt the favour that he doth at present enjoy hath cost him dear enough to presently cast him upon the world again. It is not likely that we shall recover from the present holders of our hard-earned gold. Therefore I, for my part, say 'Adieu, sweet hope!' Let us drink, gentlemen all, to the refilling of our coffers and to the health of our commander, for the water that is down the stream never will turn the mill."

Right heartily we drank the toast, for they were equally beloved.

The village of Sompallón was the extreme southern point at which any of the Spaniards had ever

arrived, either those which had come from Venezuela with Alfinger, or those from Santa Marta.

Eight days we lay in this place and all this time our General was much occupied in preparing everything for our advance, and for this he organised a company of *macheteros*, of the strongest and healthiest of the army, and put them under command of Jerónimo de Inza to go in advance as pioneers and prepare the road, and over these I was made second in command. Also he made the soldiers to carry with them a number of light canoes to aid in crossing the streams.

We all set about polishing our arms and accoutrements and getting ready our arquebuzes, and, at the first break of the morning, we all arose and, having prepared an altar, Padre Antonio de Lesgámez said the Mass and blessed us all, and we set forth again upon the way, whilst he found accommodation on the ships. Of Manrique we had scarce seen anything during this time.

Owing to the care that Olahla had bestowed upon us all, I now found our little company of friends included amongst the pioneers, with the exception of Diego and Juan Gordo, the former being busied with the General and the latter, because he had sailed with the Great Admiral and understood nautical matters, being kept on board the ships to help to navigate them.

Casting from us our heavier armour, yet not daring to lay all aside, because of the danger from the poisoned darts of the Indians, each man took his axe or cutlass and laid about him upon the soft green masses of the jungle.

The greater part of the undergrowth was not

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difficult to lay low, being palm and wild plantain and such stuff, and the larger trees we left standing; yet the labour was great because of the plague of insects, the heat, and the moisture. Piling our armour in heaps, we would cut our way forward until it was well-nigh lost to view, and then return to carry it forward to the end of the lane or *trocha*. In one day our expedition could travel that distance which we laboured eight days to clear for them.

Friar Domingo, who had remained on shore, great mass of a man and sweating at all his pores, loved to take an axe and have bitter strife with the forest growth. No arm like his to lay it low and no tongue like his to animate and encourage us. With friendly quip and jest and story would he incite us to laughter while laughter was still in us and almost when it was dead and interred in the endless forest.

"Come, come; lay on, my sons!" he would cry, "lay on for Holy Mother Church and let us open a road to the infidel!"

"You may have the infidels, Fray Domingo, whilst we gather what other plunder there be," said Captain Inza, laughing.

"Nay, nay, my son. Ye soldiers are ever taking toll of human souls that belong to us and therefore we must take toll of your gold. Justice, man, and a fair exchange!" and he winked slyly at the rest of us.

"We shall take captives then and turn them over to your Reverence to feed," was the soldier's quick and crafty reply. "Surely your Reverence hath an overabundance of nourishment."

The good friar haw-hawed loudly, but steadfastly asserted that he ate but four ounces of food each

day and that his girth was lessening daily by the same number of inches.

Again, at some other time, he would propose riddles to us to take our minds off from our trials and privations.

"What is it," quoth he, "that the poor have; the rich have not; the dead eat, and the living man eating it, dieth?"

"Ah, that is easy," replied one of the axemen, "it is patience. The poor man must needs have it: the rich man hath no need of it, for all things come easily to his hand: the dead feed upon it to await the resurrection, and the living man who liveth upon it will surely die."

"Not bad, by'r Lady," laughed the friar, clapping him upon the back with a blow that nearly brought him to his knees, "but the riddle hath a more consistent answer."

"'Tis earth," asserted Molina, "for there is naught else that the dead eat and the living would soon die of it."

"Thou art hot and cold at the same time, but hast spoken in haste, my son. For the poor have no earth save six feet by two and the rich have more than they need."

"If it be not that, then it is nothing," insisted Pedro, stubbornly.

"Now, thou hast stricken the nail on the head, my son, though certainly not of intent. The poor man hath nothing: the rich man cannot plead guilty to this: the dead eat nothing and the living die of such diet."

"Your Reverence," said Pedro, when the laugh had gone round at his expense, "let me ask you a

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riddle, for he that asketh is not always he that divineth. A muleteer drove twenty asses along the road from Sevilla to Madrid. Two of them fell sick and died, how many were left?"

"Callest thou that a riddle, man?" cried the friar. "That is but a question of numbers fit for a child, but mayhap thou dost judge the understanding of others by thine own. How many could there be but eighteen?"

"Haw, haw!" guffawed Molina, in his turn, "your Reverence is as far from it as Madrid is from Sevilla. The two that died were left: the rest went on."

The good-natured friar looked at him for a little moment with a droll expression of bewilderment and then he doubled up like a clasp-knife and shook with laughter until all his flesh quivered like jelly and his sides ached. We all joined him until he recovered himself and then we laid on again with renewed courage, for a good laugh is equal to a good dinner—almost.

Thus Friar Domingo did us good while he slashed away at the undergrowth shoulder to shoulder with us.

'Twas about the third day of our journey, as I remember, that I heard the vicious chip-chipping of a strange and lusty axe at my back. Glancing over my shoulder, to my great surprise, mine eyes fell upon Diego's lithe and handsome figure, stripped to the soft deerskin vest which he wore under his armour, and swinging an axe as though that were the craft most to his fancy; yet withal, there was a venomous snap to his action that gave food for reflection.

There were those nigh at hand, however, whose business was not ours nor theirs, so I took up the axe which I had dropped in amaze at sight of him and, pocketing my curiosity, awaited a time more favourable for its gratification. The accidents of the service brought us together at last, and far from listening ears.

"What now, Diego?" I questioned, in an undertone. He shrugged his shoulders and laughed bitterly:

"I sat in the headquarters tent a-writing when the General entered this morning. His brow was overcast and he gave a half-dozen turns about the tent as though chasing up words worthy of his thought, with which to express it. Then he said, most abruptly, and with a strange accent, 'Don Diego, we are needing a vigorous arm amongst the pioneers. Because of our necessities, to drive a quill is less glorious than to urge an axe into the heart of the tree. You are relieved from your duties here, that the place which is vacant amongst the pioneers may be filled.' 'Your Excellency,' I replied, 'knows that I am as ready to drive axe or quill as I am to draw my blade in your service.' 'Yes, yes, I know,' he rejoined, hastily and flushing a bit. It seemed as though he had no great relish for the conversation. 'Thanks for your devotion. I would be alone.' A curt dismissal, yet I see it all, for, as I passed headquarters with mine axe——"

"Manrique sat writing in the tent!" I interjected.

"Exactly! Thou hast divined it. How he hath won his way I know not, but every saint hath his candle and there he standeth by the General while I am worse than laid aside."

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"Calumny is a devouring flame which consumeth all that it toucheth and blackeneth that which it cannot consume. Depend upon it, it hath taken heavy argument to convince the General that thou art not loyal. Let be, and we shall see the sequel!"

"There is no choice that I can see save to let be. The cat well knows whose whiskers she licketh. Yet I believe, also, that the General did violence to his better self, and is convinced against his will and better judgment. At least I have the solace of thy company and therewith shall be content."

"Well said," I exclaimed, "for princes' smiles do not tighten belts and I warrant that Olahla seeth that we have as good fare as thou hast had at the General's table."

At this his brow cleared somewhat and he glanced around. "Where is the girl, and how doth she this week past that I have not seen her?"

"Where she abideth the Sphinx will answer and she doth exceeding well. Witness my belt," and I made a pretence to thrust a thumb within it and fail, although I drew myself full of wind to make this pantomime.

* * * * *

Chip, chip,—went the axes again, and little by little the long green lane opened before us, but never came to an end.

Chip, chip,—and the saplings crashed upon the humid ground, dragging down the dank, tangled masses of *bejucos* as they fell.

Chip, chip,—and the warm rain poured down upon us for hours and days and weeks, so that we stood in puddles and shed streams of moisture from our steaming bodies to make the puddles greater.

Chip, chip,—while the food grew less, and our strength grew less, and the toil grew ever greater.

Chip, chip,—and the axe fell at last from the hand, and when we turned them over, 'twas another brave adventurer gone to his last account. For the fever and the other things sap the strength of the strongest, and only indomitable valour keepeth the axe a-falling until the soul and the body are pried apart, and then the valour becometh an attribute of the soul only, whilst the body is conquered at last.

That which annoyed us most was the constant falling of the heavy rains of the season, so that there was never time to dry our tattered garments from one shower until another would be upon us.

Upon our bodies there appeared, also, great sores or ulcers which would not heal, and each scratch of a thorn or bite of an insect was likely to produce such a result; also there came worms or grubs in the flesh, especially on our backs between our shoulders, which is a common plague throughout the Indies.

As the days went by and our expedition saw no end to the great forest, more and more were they who succumbed beneath so many afflictions. Some cast aside their loads and some fell upon all-fours, and thus followed the rest like cats and dogs, that they might not be left behind to be torn by the wild beasts, amongst which are great tigers and lions,—at least I have never seen any of the latter, although I have often heard them roar; but many there be who have seen them, together with a very fierce and formidable creature somewhat resembling an elephant, yet it appears that this great creature doth not feed upon human flesh, but eateth green stuff like an ox.

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Many and many a brave man laid himself down with his back against a tree and there we left him, scarce glancing back in farewell as we pressed wearily on. Yet to this indifference there was one most notable exception.

There was one soldier who had with him his own son. I saw the old man fall in his tracks one day and, halting, I placed my hand upon his heart to see if he had succumbed altogether. At that he opened his eyes.

"Where is my son, Fernando?" he feebly asked.

I called the young man to him and he came limping and staggering, for, in very truth, he was but little better off than his sire.

"Fernando! Fernando!" called the old man, again.

"Yes, my father," replied the man, "art thou overcome?"

"Ay,—strength hath failed me. I am done," he muttered. "I shall not come to the end of our labours. I must rest here. Do thou go on!"

"What,—and leave thee? Not so, my father! I will stay by thee."

"Nay, nay,—thou canst not stay and I can go no further."

"Then I stay with thee,—come what may come!"

A tear welled up in the old man's eye that seemed already glazing in death. "I command thee to leave me. Farewell! May God go with thee and thy patron San Fernando guard thee!"

"Nay, my father. I go not one step without thee."

The old man lay still for a moment save that his

body shook with emotion. Then at last he spoke. "It will not be long. I feel the chill of death. Do thou stay then and close these old eyes and put this old frame in some fashion under the ground that the foul beasts and birds rend not the carrion. This last service I permit thee, my son."

The young man knelt by his side and gazed fondly at the miserable skeleton that had once been a brave and stalwart soldier. Then he looked back at the axemen with whom he belonged and saw that they had come to carry forward their armour and other possessions. There I left him and went on to my labours, but when the axemen had come up with their loads to the end of the *trocha*, there he was with the old man upon his back and, when he laid him down, he went on with his work.

Thus he bare him for six days whenever we moved forward and then we found them both dead one morning when we awoke, for the son had died also because of his too arduous labours or because his courage was gone, which is, indeed, the best way to finish a man quickly.

Father and son lay stretched side by side upon the ground, for we had no time nor strength to dig graves with our daggers for the many that died, and when we came back a few hours later to carry forward the baggage, Pedro de Molina pointed to where there was a great black moving mass on the corpse of the son.

"What is that, friend Gonzálo, that I see there? It hath the appearance of no animal and yet it hath life."

We approached and looked more closely and then saw what it was and called the attention of all.

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"'Tis, in faith, a swarm of bees that hath perched upon the body," I cried, in wonder.

"Thou sayest truth," said Molina, "and the cause is not difficult to learn, for it is evident that the sweet devotion of the son hath so affected the blood and flesh of his body that the bees have found them savoury."

A hush fell upon us all at the thought and we felt ashamed that we had not given sepulture to one who had died in such a way, and would have repaired the wrong, but that we liked not to disturb the bees. As we spoke of this to one another, however, the swarm arose and, humming softly, circled about in the open air of the *trocha*, gradually rising and finally vanishing over the tree-tops. We took this to be a sign and fell to with our daggers, soon excavating a shallow trench wherein we laid father and son, side by side.

At last we came to a large river which we were not able to cross, so the General sent word to the ships that they should approach and ferry us across, which they did, and Padre Antonio came ashore and continued with us and with Friar Domingo.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN FAMINE STALKED

FROM day to day our hunger now grew upon us until we were not only fain to devour the horses that died along the way, with their skin and entrails and other parts which do not ordinarily serve for food, but there was no living creature that came into our hands, neither snake, toad, nor other being, that we did not eat. For good hunger there is no bad bread.

One night we were encamped at the end of our *trocha*, sitting about fires which half served to keep off mosquitos with their smoke, and half to cheer us, in lieu of any culinary use; for we had naught to eat of any account save what each one had found during the day.

Our company was at the moment somewhat better provided, as was often the case, thanks to Olahla, for there was a large green lizard, or iguana, in the ashes and, while we waited, our minds ran on eating, as a hungry stomach will often compel the thoughts. As was most natural, our conversation was of the same ever-engrossing theme. We were not alone, for a dozen or more were joined to our company, in the hope of sharing the savoury mess that began to give forth a most comfortable odour from the embers.

"I mind me," began Molina, "of when I was with Ponce de León in Florida, how we were come to such a pass that one of the men was tempted to

slay an Indian woman who guided us that he might eat her liver, for which he had conceived a haunting appetite."

I kicked the stupid fellow's shin, and he drew it up in offended dignity, and became silent.

"And how went the matter?" asked a villain fellow of the company, that same Malatesta, in fact, who had had an affair with me in Santa Marta.

"How went it?" replied Molina, impatiently. "How should it go? By chance he spake of his intention to a comrade, who painted the act to him in such hideous colours that he gave over his intention. At least, I know not whether it was that what he said to him of the Spanish name and repute for chivalry prevailed with him, or it may have been the piece of cheese which his comrade had been treasuring for an hour of need and which he gave to him. At any rate, he ate the cheese and let the woman be and, ere long, we came to a field of maize and ate our fill."

"For the matter of that, 'tis not the first Indian that hath filled a Spanish belly ere now," responded the fellow, looking hungrily at the girl who stood by.

"Nor the last that will, I warrant," said one who sat by him.

"For my part, I judge that it is better that a red heathen should give his flesh to sustain a Christian, than that that same Christian should give what little he hath besides skin and bone to nourish a flock of hungry vultures;" and he laughed bitterly.

"When I was with Alfinger on his voyage from Venezuela to Tamalameque, for 'twas he that first went amongst the natives of that place; finding ourselves in dire straits, he sent Captain Bascona with

twenty-five men and sixty thousand pesos of gold which we had taken, with Indians to carry it, to go and fetch provisions and fresh troops. The gold he sent to entice more men to come, but it lieth in a hollow tree in the depths of the forest until this day. As for the men, one only of them lived to tell of their adventures, and him they found by chance years afterwards, dressed as an Indian and risen to be chief captain of a tribe of the natives."

"What of the rest, comrade," asked Molina; "did the natives slay them?"

"'Tis a gruesome tale," went on the other, after a pause, and stuffing his mouth greedily with the oily flesh of the lizard which was offered him; then, between bites: "Their cargo-Indians began to die, so that, at last, they could drive them no further and were forced to bury the treasure in a tree, which they marked and mapped and never saw again. Driven by hunger they then slew the remaining Indians one by one and ate them." An exclamation of horror went up from the little circle.

"That is worse than bestial," I interrupted. "Of the animals, only the wolves will eat their own dead comrades when they die of their own accord and when forced by hunger, not to speak of slaying them first."

"Where necessity knocketh at the door, virtue flieth out of the window. There is worse to follow in my tale," replied the soldier, calmly, "for they went on from day to day slaying their *cargueros*, as I am saying, and eating them to the last morsel, until there were none left, and then, fearing lest they fall upon and devour one another, they divided into small bands and separated, in the hope that some

of them might have the fortune to come out of the forest, and all save four were never heard of again."

"So four came out at last," remarked one of his companions, encouragingly.

"Did I not tell thee that only one of them lived to tell the tale?" growled the historian, wiping his greasy fingers on his leathern breeches, after licking them as clean as he might with his tongue. He then went on: "The four proceeded on their way, and presently came to a river, and here they sat down and waited, because they saw signs of Indians about. After a time, a canoe with four Indians passed, and to the men they seemed like angels in their necessity.

"They cried aloud and made signs to them to come to land, for they hoped to seize the canoe and slay their angelic visitors for food; but, finally, as the Indians would not come, they made signs that they were perishing of hunger.

"At this the Indians gave them to understand that they would shortly return with food, and went away to their village, and brought them back in a short time an abundance of maize, yams, plantains, and other food, which they brought boldly to land, doubtless judging that gratitude would safeguard them.

"Upon this, the four Spaniards fell upon the Indians in order to add their carcasses to the provender, but, because they were weak, they let three of the natives get away, but the fourth they slew and roasted over a fire for their feast. Fearing then that the Indians might return with others to punish them, they set out to follow up the river, but laying their course always toward the mountains. Three of them died on the way, either to feed the rest, or at the

hands of the Indians, but the fourth found refuge in a village of the natives and finally married the chief's daughter and became a great man amongst them. How it was that they made a king of him I know not, but in the land of the blind a one-eyed man is king, and our worst is better than the best of these barbarians."

"The Saints preserve *us* from coming to such straits!" exclaimed Diego. "Can there be Spaniards—valiant soldiers—who will perform such deeds?"

"Ay, and worse," replied the Venezuelan. "'Twas common custom with us to chain the *cargueros* in a line, to prevent them from escaping or casting their burdens in the morass, as they oft would do. Whereas, by chaining them, and then tying their loads to the chain, they could no longer play such fanciful pranks upon us. When one of them gave out, it was too much trouble to unloose the long chain, and it also gave the others a chance to escape to do this, so our Captains cut them out with one blow of the sword. Some of them came to be expert at the business, and could slice a head like a carrot-top."

"Small wonder that we have been but ill-received on our expedition; yet our Captain is not like the rest, for he seeketh to win their friendship," said Molina.

"Ay, he seeketh, but he will seek in vain and change his policy at last. There is no arguing with unseen foes and poisoned darts shot out of blow-pipes as long as a lance."

As a man who hungers dreams of dining, so all our talk ran on matters of this sort, and at last we

all began to fear some haunting thing amongst us which we dared not name, excepting as belonging to the historical past, and scenes far distant from us.

The next day I slew a large ape and sent a portion to the General. As for myself, I could not eat him, for he lay stretched upon his back and died with his eyes open, with all the expression that I have oft seen in men dying upon the battle-field. His eyes looked at me reproachfully, while his hands opened and closed like a man's, and so he passed away, humanly enough to quit me of mine appetite. I ate some ants and bits of roots that Olahla brought me, while the rest devoured the ape and vowed that he tasted like ancient goat sauced with hunger.

The General fared no better than the rest of us, save for such gifts of food as the soldiers were inclined to make him when they had anything. As we laboured, he stood at our elbows and directed us so that we wasted not our strength, or with a word of cheer he spurred us on to fresh endeavour. Constant was his watchful care and provision, yet he could not be at all points at once, and discipline grew often lax where hunger ruled.

As at first they had talked of things they no longer dared mention, now that the men were dying faster they fell to doing that which had so long been on their minds and in their imaginations.

One day, not long after we had commenced our work with the axe, there came a messenger from the General, calling Captain Inza with the men to where he was stationed with the horses and baggage. Dropping our axes and wiping away the streaming sweat, we retraced our steps to the place where we had passed the night.

As we approached the spot, we saw at once that there was some business of moment in hand, for our little army was all drawn up in order, whilst the General and the Captains were seated upon fallen logs in their midst. As we took our positions in the circle, we saw that the carcasses of three horses were lying upon the ground with great wounds in their throats.

One thought came to all of us at the same moment, that the General had taken thought upon our distress and had commenced to slay the horses to provide us with meat. But we were quickly undeceived and, in truth, we might have known our leader better.

One glance at his grave and severe demeanour, and the anxiety depicted upon the faces of the Captains, enlightened us. Then Quesada spoke:

"I am grieved to have to call ye together, sirs, on such a matter as this. Ye all know that the safety and good fortune of this expedition depend upon the conservation of our little company of cavalry and that the life of one horse is of more real value than that of ten men, valiant though they be. Last night a deed was done which hath touched me to the quick. Here lie three of our faithful steeds, stricken by a dastard, the appetite of whose body hath been greater than the magnitude of his soul. Whose was the hand that did the deed I know not as yet, but shall presently determine. Here among the weapons are two daggers bathed in blood, which have been found in their sheaths. To whom do these blades belong?"

One of the Captains held them up before us, and immediately Diego strode forward, took one of them

and looked at it closely, then returned it, and said:

"Your Excellency, this one is mine!"

"Whose is the other?" asked Quesada, fiercely.

"That is not for me to say, your Excellency," replied Diego, firmly, but respectfully.

The General's eye flashed fire, and he was about to speak when I sprang to Diego's side.

"It is mine, your Excellency. But I know not how it came to be stained with blood as I see it."

Quesada's lip curled in scorn. "What is that upon thy sleeve, then?" he asked, in a cold and contemptuous voice.

I turned mine arm and saw that my sleeve was splashed with blood, which was already dry and hardened. My face must have paled, and words certainly failed me for a moment, but, at length, I replied as firmly as I could:

"I know not how it came there, your Excellency, but I see that my sleeve is indeed stained with blood. The evidence is strong against me, but I speak the truth."

The General looked at me as though he would search the inmost recesses of my soul and seemed to be in doubt.

"What hast thou to say, Diego de Alarcón?" he said, at length, turning to my companion.

"I can only say that no hand of mine hath done this foul deed, your Excellency. That our honourable blades have been made to serve a most dishonourable purpose seemeth evident."

"The use of the blades doth not of necessity incriminate the owners," said Quesada, judicially, "in that the arms lay piled in confusion upon the ground,

save that ye two are sworn comrades and your two knives bear the marks of guilt. But how came that blood upon thy companion's sleeve? What say ye, my Captains,—what is your judgment of the matter?"

The Captains whispered together aside with the General, and Manrique was not backward amongst them. At length, the General turned toward us.

"There is some difference of opinion," he said, shortly, "but the majority adjudge ye guilty of the deed. I would rather ye had slain a score of my men in a brawl, for this treason concerneth the safety of the Province and the weal of his Catholic Majesty. There are but two penalties possible. Death or abandonment in the forest. Ye shall elect. Choose quickly that no more time may be lost! With the first returning ship I shall send a post to Santa Marta, advising them of your dishonour in case ye win through."

Diego looked at me, and I at him. What a choice to make! Death with dishonour or a bare chance for life,—with the same.

I glanced about at our comrades and read pity and contempt in equal portions upon the faces of some; malignity upon others, and sympathy upon a few, for every one kicks at a lame dog. 'Twas like an heretic's choice betwixt cross and cauldron.

"Time may right us, lad!" I cried, at length. "Please God we shall win through to the City."

"So say I!" echoed Diego.

"To your work! To your work!" cried the General; "but, ere ye go, bear in mind,—hereafter I decree death upon him who eateth of horse-flesh,

regardless of the hand that slayeth the beast. Yet, for the good of the expedition, I shall portion out these three beasts that lie slain, amongst ye all, save only these two who thought to provide the feast. And now, begone!"

All this while the Indian maid had hung about us, half divining and yet scarce fully comprehending what was passing. Finally she seemed to see, with her ready wit, what she could not altogether understand in words and, as the men were turning back to their labours, she sprang before the General and cried out in her clear musical voice:

"General! General! Olahla do it! Olahla kill horse. What for have horse? Too much bother. Much better horse die. Eat horse. No let man die!"

Every soul of us paused to listen, and the General was all taken aback.

"So thou art the culprit. God pity thee! Thou didst know no better."

"Yes, General. Olahla kill horse. Take knife. Cut horse in neck."

The General reflected. Manrique leaned forward and whispered in his ear and a sudden light of suspicion illumined his countenance. "What about the blood on the man's sleeve?" he asked, pointing to me.

The girl's answer was ready. "Olahla kill horse. Then go put knife away. All dark night. Fall against tree. Knife fall on Don Gonzálo in hammock. Don Gonzálo make noise; turn over; knife fall on ground. Olahla put it back and go hide. Very much 'fraid Don Gonzálo wake up."

Again Manrique whispered, but the General

frowned and shook his head. "Nay," I heard him say, "I will not believe it!"

Then he turned to us, and in his frank and manly way, as when the evil humour was not upon him, asked our pardon for his error.

"Gentlemen all,—this doth put a different complexion upon the affair," he said. "I scarce see how I can punish this ignorant savage for her rash deed, and we shall soon have need of her as a guide. In any event, these knights are restored to my confidence." He drew his hand across his brow and paused; then exclaimed: "Let us hear no more of the matter! Ye are now advised of the future penalty;" and turned away.

When I could speak with the girl, I asked her what made her do such a criminal deed, but she looked at me in such a way that a flood of light burst upon me.

"What!" I cried, "thou hast lied to save us?"

"Olahla no sabee *lie*. What is *lie*? Olahla only make story to fool General,—save Don Gonzálo;" and she shrugged her shoulders in the Spanish fashion, with a most bewitching air of innocence.

"Who did the deed, Olahla?" I asked, impatiently.

"Olahla think maybe Don Gonzálo do it,—no?" and she pursed her lips at me.

I laughed and bade her guess again.

"Then maybe Don Diego?" she enquired, with mock solicitude.

"Not I, Olahla," put in Don Diego, who had approached whilst we were talking,—“thou knowest better.”

"Give over thy fooling, girl. What thinkest

thou of the matter?" I asked, seriously, for I was sorely ill-at-ease and would have given my hope of future treasure to have evidence.

"Olahla no find nothing. Olahla look, look, look. Too many mans walk all about before Olahla come. No can say. Too sorry, but no can say."

The hand of our enemy again, beyond a doubt! Were we never to be free from his ambuscades and hidden craft? There being no help, we must go on and keep what watch we could.

It chanced upon a day when my tour at the axe was over, and Diego was likewise at liberty, for we worked together amongst the pioneers, that we had drawn somewhat apart from the *trocha* in search of game of any sort for our supper. As all is fish that cometh to some men's nets, so all was game that fell before our arms, be it toad or bat or lizzard, and even thus we had been nigh as ill off as the rest had it not been for the girl, who lost herself for hours in the jungle, returning with various small matters to add to our larder. Once or twice, indeed, she was gone for days and brought us maize and plantains from some distant Indian village. All this we shared with the General and various ones amongst our comrades, but kept our strength withal, and were somewhat less ill-conditioned than the rest.

As we pushed our way cautiously through the dense growth of the forest, cutting with our swords the vines and branches which impeded our progress, there lay in our path a great log that had fallen and yet had not rotted away, because the roots still held partly to the earth. Upon this I leaped, being in advance, when, like a flash, a great head rose vertically to a level with my face and, opening a mouth

which left but little to be seen of the animal itself, expressed its rage or disgust in a loud hissing.

So sudden was the apparition, and so foul the air that sallied from its throat, that my hand moved more quickly than my thoughts—as is often the case with one's tongue—and I smote the great snake over the head with the flat of my sword ere I knew what I was about. At once I repented of the rashness of mine act, but, to mine astonishment, the serpent instantly disappeared. Leaping to the ground, I found that he had withdrawn to the interior of the great trunk of the tree, which was hollow and served for his habitation.

“Do thou go back and fetch the axes and a couple of our comrades, Diego lad, whilst I abide here and keep guard over our dinner!” I exclaimed, joyfully, seating myself on a bit of rotten wood to await his coming.

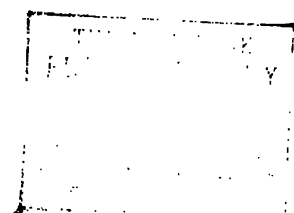
Diego hurried away, whilst I fell to cooking and dining, in mine imagination, upon the great snake that was prisoner in the tree.

Here I had been for a quarter of an hour, when I heard the cracking of branches and looked about me to see what animal was coming. To my surprise, I saw Olahla making her way carefully toward the tree, examining every leaf and twig as she passed. Now whether she was searching for me or had come upon the trail of the serpent, I could not tell, and was about to call to her when I caught sight of some one who was following her. I myself was partially concealed by the log and partially by the thick green stuff of the jungle, so that I could easily see without being seen.

Cautiously stealing after the Indian girl was that



Cautiously stealing after the Indian girl was
that same soldier, Malatesta



same soldier, Malatesta, who had eyed her with hungry covetousness a few days before, and in his hand he bore a keen knife. Olahla seemed blind to any suspicion of his presence, as she slowly approached the place where I was sitting. For a moment I hesitated whether to cry aloud or to rush forth and protect the girl, *vi et armis*, when, of a sudden, she disappeared from view at the opening in the tree into which the snake had gone.

Horror chilled the blood in my veins, but suddenly, ere I could move, she appeared again at the opening and slipped lightly to my side, expressing no surprise at sight of me, and motioning me to conceal myself better in the thick foliage of the fallen tree. In the same instant, her pursuer appeared at the end of the tree and gazed blankly about him in every direction. Suddenly he espied the great hole and seemed to be relieved. Stealing toward it, he peered into the dark interior. At length he cried, "Ah,—I see her eyes shining. I have her fast this time," and thrust his body in at the opening.

Olahla chuckled with glee, and I instantly divined her purpose.

"Olahla, girl!" I exclaimed, in horror, "what does this mean? Here, fellow,—come out of there!" The girl sprang to catch me by the arm and, daring mine anger, clung to it and cried: "No, no! Let him be! He try many times to get Indian girl. Think he kill horse for Captain Manrique, too! Now, Olahla get him!"

In spite of her protests, however, I sprang forward to warn the miserable victim of his own foul appetite, but it was too late. In that same instant there arose a shriek of terror fit to curdle the blood,

and the trunk of the tree trembled as the huge serpent lashed about within it; then all was silent as the grave, save a sound of crushing and cracking, which also ceased suddenly.

At this moment Diego came upon the scene with his comrades, armed with lances and axes, and, in a few moments, we had opened another great hole in the trunk and thrust the huge serpent through the neck with spears, so that it uncoiled itself from the mass of broken bones and flesh that had been a man so short a time before, and presently it died and we cut it in great pieces and bore it to the camp. First we laid it out straight upon the earth and paced ten paces from head to tail, while its girth, in the thickness of its body, was as that of a man.

Angry as I felt at the Indian girl, I could not blame her greatly, after all, for it appeared from her account that the man had persistently sought her life until she laid this trap for him, and thus the strap for his flogging was torn from his own hide.

That night we had a great feast and, when we had eaten heartily, of a sudden we all began to sweat mightily, until we were drenched with our own moisture: then we were all heavily weighed down with sleep, and fell upon the ground and slept until the second day, so that the rest of the meat stank when we awoke and the *gallinazos* were picking at it by our very heels.

The next day we came to a small stream and sought to find a ford. Commanding Molina and a half-dozen other of the peons to enter the water with poles or staves and sound the depths, to discover the shoals so that the rest might pass, I mounted my horse to try the firmness of the bottom. Suddenly

one and another of the footmen gave loud cries and, with ludicrous grimaces and evident terror, tried to regain the bank. Some of them fell down in the shallow water and splashed and floundered with loud cries.

Now I knew that it could not be an attack of the caymans, both because of the shallowness of the water and the actions of the men, but, as Molina fell down before me and I feared that he might drown, I put spurs to my horse and urged the animal toward him, so that I might lean over and extricate him from his dangerous position. No sooner had I reached his side, however, than my poor beast gave a snort of terror and trembled in every limb. To mine amaze, his panic seemed to be communicated to me and I thought that I had been sprinkled with drops of some fiery substance or thrust into a bed of nettles. A prickling sensation, most disconcerting and uncomfortable to feel, ran over my body and, in my surprise, I lifted myself in the stirrups and fell to yelling like the rest.

By this time our comrades were gathering fast upon the water's edge, and some adventured to run into the water to our aid, when, immediately, they were taken with the same distemper and fell to screaming and rolling in the water. Seeing that no great evil was come to the men in the water, our comrades on the bank commenced laughing at our plight and threw us ropes, by which some managed to draw themselves out, and, as soon as they left the water, experienced no further molestation, but Olahla, who had been laughing at us also, took a spear from one of the men, and when she had thrust it a few times into the water, brought out a great

slimy fish, or eel, which she cast upon the shore. In a moment she took another one, and then the soldiers followed her example and secured a large number before the school of fishes took alarm and disappeared.

Immediately my horse recovered, and all the men who were left in the water came to land. Dismounting, I stooped down and laid my hand upon one of the fishes that Olahla had taken, although she was quick to warn me. I thought that I had been struck with a beam, for over I went on my back, with my heels in the air and all my nerves a-tingling. When I got up, the girl was doubled up with laughter.

"No touch him, Don Gonzálo! No touch him! Byrne-by he die. Then eat him. Velly good."

"Why didst thou not say so before, girl?" I cried, with rather genuine annoyance, but was only answered by another gale of laughter, and at last had to laugh myself.

Laughing came not easily to us in those dark days of hunger and distress, but the sight of all our brave fellows playing the part of mountebanks in the water was too much for those who had been safe on the shore. Sadness poisons the soul. Better was it for us that we could laugh at all.

"Tell me, girl," I said to her, when the merriment had subsided, "dost thou know this fish?"

"Yes, yes, Don Gonzálo, Olahla know him. He make Olahla laugh. Byrne-by Don Gonzálo eat him. Then feel better."

"And with what doth the fish attack us? For I suppose all this trouble cometh from them?"

"Olahla not know. He make laugh. Byrne-by dead. Then not make laugh any more."

It was evident that the girl knew the strange power of this extraordinarily marvellous fish, but not the source of it or how it was exercised. So I turned to Molina, who was always much given to reasoning.

"What thinkest thou, Pedro, of this matter?" I asked.

"I think that the fish is greatly disturbing in his manner of attack," he replied.

"Thinkest thou not that I have already discovered that for myself? When I touched him he smote me with some occult power. My horse was not even exempt, and through the body of the horse he smote me in the saddle. What hast thou to say to that? Come,—give us some hypothesis, for thou hast also felt his attack."

"Ay,—I felt it to the depths of my marrow and to my liver and entrails, whilst a demon dance played through the great bone of my back."

"What sayest thou, then?" I persisted. "Is it of the Evil One or may we eat of the flesh?"

"It is beyond me to say," he replied, after looking longingly at the fine fish, gasping in their last agony upon the shore, "but methinks it were well to give a piece of one, properly baked in the ashes, to some one of us who feareth not the Evil One—and many there be here who would serve us in this—and then, if no harm come to him, we that be more fearsome may adventure it."

"Let us the rather ask Padre Antonio or Fray Domingo!" exclaimed one of the soldiers,—“If the power is of the Evil One, we may baste them with holy water that they do us no harm in the eating.”

But the two arbiters of our dispute were already

pushing their way through the hungry crowd that sought to reconcile the demands of their empty bellies with those of theology, and were somewhat inclined to yield the latter to the former.

Fray Domingo's burly form, somewhat reduced 'tis true with hunger, was the first to make way, and the good man drew near, wiping the great drops of sweat from his brow with the ragged sleeve of his cassock, whose forlorn and dilapidated skirts had already been ravished by the thorns of our way until his stout legs, in their leather breeches, were well exposed beneath them.

"Mary Mother,—what is this? Hath it been revealed that Friday is the day that we are come to, for I have long lost count of them, feast and fast?" His fat lips began to work one upon another and to make a soft sucking sound. Then he smacked them loudly and leaned over, with his eyes sparkling, and seized one of the great eels in both his hands. By chance it was one of the fishes that was not yet altogether dead, and Fray Domingo felt his awesome power.

"Holy Mother and Saint Dominick!" he cried, "take him away!" for he could not let him go. The men all laughed, and I struck with my sword and cut the fish in twain.

Fray Domingo held to the two halves and looked about at us with an expression of ludicrous agony, changing to immense and sheepish relief. We all laughed again at the changing emotions depicted on his great honest face. He flung the pieces from him and crossed himself with fervour; then turned in mock anger to the crowd about him.

"Ay, ye may laugh at the Devil and his works,

for ye are all his children. Plague upon ye! What new marvel is this?"

"May it please your Reverence," said Molina, "I have now bethought me what may be the reason of this strange portent."

"Leave that to thy betters, fellow!" said the hard voice of Padre Antonio, as he turned a sharp glance upon him. "All these dangers that affront us are of the Evil One, who seeketh to stay our progress lest the shadow of the Cross fall upon the nations in darkness and strike off his fetters from their limbs. Cast these diabolical beasts into the stream!"

"Not so fast! Not so fast, Padre Antonio!" interposed Fray Domingo. "Let us hear what this fellow hath to say and, if it be reason, our bellies may profit by it and, if it be not, then let us exorcise Master Satan and turn his weapons into provender for the good of our cause and the glory of God;" and he cast a longing glance at the heap of great fishes and smacked his lips unctuously.

Padre Antonio frowned, but, after looking about at the hungry glances of the soldiers, shrugged his shoulders and turned away, as though to have no part in such a compromise.

"Speak up, my son," said Fray Domingo, then, "and tell us if there be aught of reason in the matter, but see that thou pound not on an empty barrel. Also bear well in mind that it is by the mouth that a fish dies."

Pedro needed no further prompting and swelled himself noticeably, as he now found opportunity for his well-loved exercise.

"Craving your Reverences' pardon," he began, deprecatingly, but with evident satisfaction, "let the

truth prevail though I may lie. I take it, then, that these fish should be rightly denominated 'thunder fish';" and he looked about him with an eye of mystery and confidence.

"Thunder fish! And how so? Are they not silent as the tomb? Give us something better or give us peace!" cried the burly friar.

Pedro smiled with lofty superiority, and I saw the black wrath gathering on the friar's brow. Pedro saw it, too, and made haste to go on:

"Ay, your Reverence, 'thunder fish,' and the reason is this: Ye all know that when the thunder cometh from heaven and striketh upon the trees it doth rive them asunder with great power. Furthermore, when we stand not far from the tree while it is stricken and have our armour upon us, oftentimes we are taken with the same sudden shocks and prickling sensations as come from the contact with these fishes and, at times, the shock even resulteth fatally;" and he glanced about in triumph at the conviction he saw coming upon the faces of those about him as he spoke.

"And what may that have to do with these fishes?" asked Padre Antonio, sharply, for he had again drawn near.

"One moment, your Reverence, and I shall endeavour to make plain what I have conceived. We all know that oftentimes the bolts from heaven fall upon the surfaces of the rivers and lakes and disappear beneath them. Now it seemeth to me to be evident that, in some manner we know not of, these fishes are so constituted that they are able to swallow and retain small fragments of these bolts, which cannot burn them nor injure them because of the pro-

tection of the cold water, their native element. When, therefore, they come into close proximity or contact with ourselves, we feel that same shock and prickling as is derived from the bolt itself, and by this contact is the force dissipated and eventually nullified."

"Bueno! Bueno!" cried all our comrades, and Pedro stepped back with an air of gratified pride.

Fray Domingo was all taken aback and carried away with this reasoning, but Padre Antonio laughed and snapped out: "Fiddlesticks! 'Tis diabolical altogether and this man may have part with it. *Vade retro, Satanas!* Here, Fray Domingo, bring me water in that great iron pot that thou hast upon thy head for a hat and we will soon make the fiend take his foul hands from off these fishes."

Blessing the water which his colleague brought him in his helmet, he sprinkled it upon the great eels, muttering his exorcism the while.

"If the Devil was there, he is gone," said the good friar, laying hold on the largest fish, "and, if he wasn't there, he's not there now, so we get our dinner either way."

The rest of us followed his example and, either because the Devil was departed or because the fish were now all dead and could do us no further harm, we suffered no more shocks, and when we came to try the crossing again we felt the fish no more, which may have been because the foul fiend could not withstand us or perhaps because the fish had gone to other parts.

Whilst we were undergoing all these things upon the land, those upon the ships were suffering equally from hunger and labour; but at last they came in

sight of a large town, which gave so much satisfaction to the commander, Captain Juan Gallegos, that he sent on shore to get the General before he would approach it.

When the General knew that there was hope of finding food at last, he would not trust the taking of it even to his brother, Hernán Pérez de Quesada, but took command in person, and, taking with him Captains Antonio de Lebrija, Baltasar Maldonado, Antonio de Olalla, Vanegas, Domingo de Aguirre, and Pedro de Velasco, they armed themselves and took three small boats, in which they paddled toward the town, accompanied only by the General's negro servant and an Indian guide and, having crept along the margin of the river all night, a matter of three leagues, towards morning they came upon a canoe with two scouts from the town, to which they gave pursuit, but were unable to overtake it; whereupon they turned their boats toward the town, which lay upon a high point of the shore, dry and healthy, and containing some thirty large well-built huts.

Leaping ashore with their arms, and alert against surprise, the General and his companions entered the village, to find all deserted, for the Indians had taken all their belongings and moved to the other side of the river at sight of the brigantines, where they remained to see what the Spaniards would do.

Having assured himself that all were gone, the General looked about to see if there were any growing crops, and found a large quantity of maize now about ripe, which greatly gladdened his heart.

As the ships had been commanded to follow as fast as possible, they awaited them at the village six days without suffering any attack from the Indians,

and then those that were following along the shore arrived, together with the brigantines, and all were greatly overjoyed at sight of the standing crops, but the General ordered that no man should touch so much as a single ear, under pain of death, lest all gorge themselves and trample down all that there was, ere it could be dealt out in proper fashion; whereas, with care, it would do for many days, whilst the sick rested in the good houses of the Indians.

Thus Juan Gordo again became one of our little company, which added greatly to our satisfaction, and we all found a place together in a hut which we built for ourselves.

We were much encouraged about this time because of some finely-woven and ornamented cloths which were found in some of the chief houses of the town. These must have come from some people advanced in civilisation and knowledge, and we were now assured that we were nearing the goal to which we aspired, for none of our Indians, save Olahla, had ever seen such things or knew whence they came; but the maid stoutly declared that they were made by her people and even interpreted the pattern upon them, which seemed to be some sort of barbarous writing.

At the place where the town lieth the Great River divideth itself in four branches, so that the place is often called Cuatro Brazos, also Barrancas Bermejas, because of the red colour of the banks, and the town itself is called La Tora.

Many of our sick died there and were cast into the river to save the trouble of burying them, and, from eating these bodies, the caymans became so

daring that they lay in wait near the shore and even sallied forth and seized some of the men who went to fetch water or wash clothes.

When the crop of corn began to give out, the General sent out several expeditions, all of which met with ill-success and, this being so, the minds of many began to turn again towards the City of Santa Marta, and even most of those who thought not to return to the City, hoped that they might be permitted to return as far as Tamalameque and there build a town. Having made Captain Sanmartín and Juan Cespedes their spokesmen, they sent an embassy to the General to make known their mind to him.

Here was, indeed, come upon Quesada an hour and an emergency to try the boldest. Yet such was the metal of the man that he seemed made for such a time as this. Quesada's glory flamed forth in adversity: in prosperity its light was dimmed. Here stood a man who was every inch a man, upon the bank of this broad-flowing turbid stream, with hope as swiftly retreating as though the current had turned upon itself and was bearing her upward and inland: shame behind, terror in advance, discontent and mutiny on every side. Behind us lay the great jungle; upon the evening and the morning dews floated the fever; and through the heated air of noon-day writhed thoughts of rebellion like a poisonous serpent. Yet Quesada faced the known and the unknown perils undaunted. Where many a man would have cringed and pleaded and temporised, he turned in fierce anger and spoke to them in words which ripped the stitches out of their ears:

"It never was mine intention, when I accepted the leadership of this army, to permit any one to dic-

tate to me. God, in whose presence we are, knoweth that I feel the sufferings and death of each one as though he were a brother, and as such indeed I consider all; therefore, I have always, and now more than ever, sought to ameliorate your misfortunes, as in doing this I ameliorate mine own; and I express to you frankly what are my thoughts, in order to see if in any way we can come at some plan by which we may accomplish those purposes, to realise which we left Santa Marta, enduring so much; and though it has come to my mind at times to return, as you now propose to me, yet have I set such thoughts aside, for it appeareth to me not to comport well with our valour and renown to give over that which we have undertaken, and especially to settle down contentedly in a place which hath already been visited by others of our people.

“ Besides this, the Indians of that neighbourhood must perforce be conquered on the water, where is their greatest strength and our least, and the profit to be gotten is less than you think, because all the gold that they have cometh not from their own lands, but from others far distant, and also the cloths that we have found in this village. As we know that they have come down this river, therefore we have reason to believe that the people from whence they come are an honest race, in that they go not naked like those which we have seen; therefore, in view of all these things, I consider it vain to abandon our undertaking, for we are not yet so few that we may not with the help of God support those labours which are yet to come, and which, I believe, will not be of great moment, until we reach the desired rest, following the remainder of the road until we come

out upon that open country which I confidently expect to see, and upon this course I am resolved. He who thinks otherwise is mine enemy, and I shall not fail to punish him as he deserves.

"I take it that ye who speak serve only as mouth-pieces for the rest and agree not yourselves with the tenor of the message which ye have brought.

"In truth I thought not to see the fire of Spanish courage dashed with so little water. Those marshes and rivers which we have crossed, together with the rains which have fallen, should serve like water thrown upon burning pitch, only to augment the heat of its burning.

"Do me the favour, therefore, to endeavour to inspire the hearts of your companions with your known valour, for an army of sheep with a lion for Captain is of more value than an army of lions with a sheep in command.

"As we are rested and refreshed, I take it that 'twill be well to undertake a longer exploration up one of these other streams that come down from the mountains. I, therefore, name Captain Sanmartín, of whose diligence I expect great things, to undertake the first expedition; in whose company will go those whom he may select, leaving here to-morrow with well-equipped canoes, and this resolution ye may announce to all."

The Captains left his presence sheepishly enough, and told his answer to the men, upon whom it produced various effects; but, as none dared to disobey, naught could be done but fall in with his will, and the following morning Captain Sanmartín set forth in three canoes, with myself and companions and seven others of the strongest amongst us, making our

way into the mouth of the River Carare, up which we paddled for three days, when we came to a hut upon the bank, abandoned by its owners, where we rested for a day to see if we might come upon some one to guide us, but, finding no one, we continued on our way the next day and, suddenly, came upon two Indians in a canoe, who cast themselves into the water and swam to the shore at sight of us, leaving the canoe in our hands.

When we saw that there was no hope of getting one of the Indians to guide us, we examined the stuff that they had left in the canoe and found some fine cotton cloths, such as we had seen at La Tora, and a number of bricks of salt, large and very white.

As this plunder seemed little to take back, our Captain decided to go on, and we soon came upon two large huts, which were also abandoned, but which seemed not to be dwelling-houses at all, but rather *bodegas*, where were collected the cloths and salt which the Indians from the Sierras brought down to trade with those who lived along the Great River.

Leaving, therefore, three brave fellows with the canoes, the rest of us set out to follow a trail which led away from the river, and this brought us, at a distance of about four leagues, upon a small plain, about a league in width, upon the farther side of which we encountered broad highways, but no houses.

At last, after having travelled some thirty leagues, we came upon two villages of six or eight huts each, and in the distance we saw several large towns, with smoke of many fires, and great cultivated areas.

As it seemed somewhat venturesome for so small a party to go on, we determined to return to our com-

panions and descend the river to report our success to the General, for we bore with us enough tokens of salt and cloth to make good our story. We thought not to take with us any other trophies, but the Indians, who must have spied upon us, attacked us in great numbers during the night when we rested, so that we scarcely escaped with our lives, but, finally, put them to flight after slaying many, one of ours being wounded, and Captain Sanmartín taking a live Indian with his own hands, whom he called Pericón, which was of great profit to us, for we treated him kindly until he became very friendly and told us, by signs, that there was a most populous region beyond the mountains.

Pointing to a plate of gold which he wore as an ornament, we asked him if there was much of that amongst them, whereupon he replied that there was; at which we were all very much pleased, as may well be imagined.

We found our comrades wondering greatly at our delay, and loaded the canoes with salt, cloth, and the weapons and ornaments which we had taken in the conflict. Taking Pericón with us, we dropped down the river with the current and soon came in sight of La Tora, which we approached clad in fantastic fashion, in the mantles and feather head-dresses of the Indians, and shouting: "Land of good cheer! Land of good cheer! Cities and people! Much gold! Level land: no mountains: no brush: good climate: abundant provisions! Land of our desire and rest from our labours, please God!"

All the soldiers rushed forth weeping for joy at the sight and sound, and embracing us and one another, and calling the General a prophet inspired of

God. Our news was great news and good news for all, and better than medicine for the sick; for they left their beds for the most part and got upon their feet, in order that they might not be left behind with the ships when the General should set out for the new country; and so anxious were they to start that the General gave orders to set out the next morning, and, after a mass, which was said by Fray Domingo de las Casas, the axemen fell to again to open a lane through the forest, whilst the brigantines kept abreast of us in the river by means of oars.

As for me, I took mine old place again amongst the pioneers.

We fought our way through the brush and timber with much labour, and many a misadventure, but we worked now with hope in our hearts.

One night, as we lay a-sleeping, there came a sudden inundation or freshet, which was caused by the rains of the interior, and the river came upon us until the horses stood to their bellies in the water, and we had to take to the trees like apes for refuge.

Here we remained two days with a ration of forty grains of parched corn, whilst our poor cattle had to live upon wild cane and stand in mire and water to their flanks.

With all these difficulties, we were twenty days in reaching the hut where we had found the first salt, and there we arrived so worn and famished that General Quesada ordered fires to be kindled 'neath some pots at the place, in order to make a broth or stew of the leather facings of our bucklers. This stew was rather a glue, such as joiners use for sticking bits of wood together, and was much better fitted for such purpose than for the bellies of brave sol-

diers, nevertheless we fell to and did ample justice to the dish, and the next day those of us who had most distinguished ourselves were invited to partake of a dog, which had followed us thus far, and which was served up with entrails, feet, skin, and blood, being well relished by all who were privileged to partake.

Fortified with this diet, we reached the deposit of salt, where the trail left the river, and here we must needs dispose of the flotilla as it could no longer follow us.

After much debate, we decided to send the sick to Santa Marta and let the well go on their way, the sick agreeing to follow when their health should be reestablished, as many of them afterwards did; and then our General Quesada and our Admiral Gallegos threw themselves into each other's arms and tenderly embraced, agreeing to meet at the same spot in twelve months, if spared by God to do so. With much sadness and many farewells, our comrades left us and dropped down the river as rapidly as the current and their oars could take them, to bear the news of our adventures to Santa Marta, where they arrived in due time, after a terrible battle with the Indians.

Those of us who remained behind left the river and followed the same route which we had taken before, until we came out of the great forest at the foothills, and here the mountains lay in plain sight before us, dark and mysterious, rising to the very skies, and hiding behind their mist-crowned summits the record of the future, written, perhaps, in letters of blood upon great stone tables, or, mayhap, engraved with an emerald pen upon tablets of gold.

Already the cold wind from the *páramo* mitigated the great heat of the valley, and we drew in great breaths, and gazed with mingled joy and awe at the forbidding heights, where great banks of clouds rolled along from scarp to battlement, and in and out of mountain gorges, concealing and revealing and ever adding mystery.

It now seemed impossible to take the horses any farther, so the General left them with the weaker soldiers under command of his brother, Hernán Pérez de Quesada, and pushed on with the rest of us to discover a route up the mountains, following the trail used by the Indians to bring down the cloths and salt to the river. This trail was but little better than a place for cats and goats to climb, but we conquered these new difficulties with a right good will. Here and there along the way we came on huts, which seemed to be way-houses for those who carried the merchandises up and down.

'Twas as we thus toiled up the ascent that I noted a great bottle made of a huge gourd, and seemingly very heavy, which Molina bare with him, yet never touched to his lips.

"What rare liquor is that, thou shameless tippler?" I cried, at sight of it,—rapping the gourd smartly with the hilt of my sword.

"Let be, boy!" he angrily retorted, sheltering the great gourd under his arm with motherly solicitude, "meddle in what concerns thee!"

"Ho, ho! So that is the tune, is it? How can I know if it concerns me until I know what is in it? Come, give us a pull at the bottle, for we are well-nigh spent!"

At sound of the banter, the others gathered round,

half laughing and half in earnest, and joined their teasing and expostulation to mine. What manner of fluid there could be in the gourd we could not easily imagine, for wine had been long unknown amongst us, and was now almost forgotten.

Molina was annoyed and half angry at the attention he had excited and, grasping the big bottle firmly with both hands about its waist, he backed away from us. Seeing that he was not inclined to take the matter as a jest, I gave over my teasing and drew my companions away.

Six days the poor fellow carried the great bottle up the terrible ascent, and then, as at last we came out upon what seemed to be the summit, he drew me aside and whispered in mine ear.

"Gonzálo, thou art a good lad and shalt share my secret. What thinkest thou that I have in the bottle?"—this with an air of triumph and huge satisfaction.

"I am sure I cannot imagine, unless it be water," I answered, laughing, "for no other liquid else hath crossed my lips for many a month."

"Thou hast divined it at the first cast, lad. It is even water."

"Water!" I almost howled; "water!"

"Hist!" he whispered, "thou shalt know the reason. Years ago a learned man, the Reverend Father Antonio Plazas, told me of the great Cordillera of Peru, and revealed to me the secret of conquering it. Upon the top of the great mountains man cannot breathe because of the thinness of the air. Now this thinness is due to the lack of moisture. If any man will carry water to the top, and then sprinkle it upon the ground, it will quickly dissipate in the

atmosphere and thus render it possible to breathe. Now, as we have reached the summit, I shall make the experiment, and try whether the good Father was right. Stand by me, that thou mayst share in the virtue of the secret."

For a moment I gazed on my companion, doubting if I had heard aright; then, seeing that he was quite serious in his scientific experiment, the fun of the thing overcame me, and I roared like a young bull.

At this Molina was in high dudgeon. "Unbeliever!" he cried, angrily, "thou shalt not share in the merit of the invention!"

"Oh, ho! Ah, ha!" I roared again; "we are breathing well enough as it is, and yonder is a whole river full of water;" and I pointed to a healthy stream which dashed through the mountain valley.

Pedro's face fell, and with it fell the gourd, which brake in pieces so that he got a pair of wet feet for his six days' labour, and, as for us, we all had breath enough to laugh him out of countenance, for, in the ardour of his scientific zeal, he had forgotten all but the bottle.

Upon the sixth day of the ascent, as I have indicated, we came out upon more open country, with standing crops, which could not have been more properly bestowed. Here we rested whilst the General sent word to his brother to bring up the horses.

While, therefore, those who had remained below were enduring great toils and suffering in the ascent, we who were above were shivering and pinched with the cold, which went to our very marrow after our long residence in the hot valley of the Great River, and because of our flimsy garments and the continual cold rains, sleet, and wind.

Yet we were better off than those who had to bring up the horses along the precipices, where a slip of the foot meant a fall of a thousand varas. It will be seen that their labours were not small when I say that they lost twenty men of their little company in making the ascent. Great were their privations, and especially their hunger, so that one of them was fain to eat a toad that he found, which made him mad, and from this distemper he never recovered.

CHAPTER XIII

THE UPLAND MARCH

KEEPING ever on our way we arrived after many days at Chipatá, in the country of the Cacique Sacre, going always toward the south, the goal of our desires. Here we first had word of the Great Cacique, or King, who governed all these territories, although we could not find that there was a general name for the country, but each town took the name of its own cacique, yet they all owed a sort of vassalage to the Zaque, or Zipa, of Bacatá, which, like the name Pharaoh, was a title given to all the supreme rulers.

This prince resided in a large town called Muequetá, or Bacatá, which the Spaniards always called Bogotá, situated about thirty leagues to the south of where we then were.

The people amongst whom we now found ourselves were very different from those who dwelt upon the lowlands of the river, being neither so warlike nor so well provided with weapons. They were also clothed in garments of fine cotton cloth and had good houses, whereas those who lived in the hot lands went naked and were but poorly off for habitations.

Having rested and regained our health and strength in the lands of Sacre, we continued our march through many towns and new experiences, finding some emeralds and gold, until we arrived at last at Guachetá. We had now been away from Santa Marta eleven months and six days, for we

left that place April 6, 1537, and it was now March 12, 1538. Guachetá was the largest place we had yet seen, having about one thousand houses and a high hill, well fortified, to which all the inhabitants fled in terror, for they knew not what to make of our colour and our beards, having none of the latter themselves. They took us for Children of the Sun, which they worshipped, but knew not whether we came in peace or anger.

In times of drouth they are accustomed to behead boys or men and drag their bodies to the hill-tops, where they expose them to the Sun, that he may be placated and permit the rains to come. So now they made us a part of their religion and were prepared to worship us and placate us in the same manner.

As we approached the town and passed through the valley, we noticed here and there by the way some little deposits of cloth and gold, and also bits of burning moque. All this we gathered up, excepting the vile stinking stuff that was burning, and only grieved that there was not more, without giving a thought to the meaning of the mystery.

Upon reaching the city the General commanded a halt outside of the place and sent a messenger to cry aloud to the Indians to come down and they would not be harmed, but either they would not believe or could not understand, for in a short time there came down five Indians bearing faggots and an old man bound, and, having lit the faggots, they returned, leaving the old man beside them.

We tried our best to capture some of the party, but could not do so, so we set the old man free and asked him, through Olahla, whose language he understood, why he was brought there bound.

In reply he made clear to us the whole mystery, and we were all greatly amazed at the news.

Whilst we stood there wondering, however, the Indians, having seen us loose the old man, thought that we were angry because his flesh was tough and we could not eat it, so they began to cast young boys over the bluff to us, although we tried to prevent them by signs and cries. Some of the boys were killed and some maimed, but some were unhurt, and all those that were alive we cared for, and set a sort of red bonnet on the old man, and put a shirt on him, and sent him back with a friendly message, so that finally he convinced them that we were not inclined to eat human flesh, but wished to be friends with them. The Cacique then sent an embassy of four Indians, and to them we told our purpose of seeking their eternal welfare, and gave them some strings of beads and small mirrors that we had, with which they were highly delighted, and then sent them back to their chief.

Whilst this was going on, one of our men had entered one of their houses in search of gold and emeralds, and had set fire to the thatch of the roof, which blazed up at once and threatened a general conflagration. To escape this danger, we all set to to put out the blaze and, seeing this, many of the Indians left their fort and came to help us, so that we fraternised cordially in the work and the Indians saw that we had no desire to hurt them. Having won their confidence in this way, we had no further difficulty with them and were thus, for the first time, on terms of genuine friendship with the natives.

At the town of Lenguazaque we were received most cordially, because of the news which had pre-

ceded us of how we had behaved at Guachetá. Quesada spared no pains to win the confidence and friendship of the people in every possible way, and laid the strictest injunctions upon the soldiers not to lay a finger on what was not theirs, nor to enter any house or field of a friendly native without orders from himself, upon pain of death.

That this law was not a dead letter will be seen by the sad and terrible occurrence which happened in the village of Suesuca, or Suesca, which we reached a little later, for a mare belonging to us put her foot in a burrow of some small animal and broke her leg, so that we must needs slay her on the outskirts of the town and leave the carcase lying there.

Now, for my sins, I had grown tired of the continual diet of venison, which had long been our portion, for, now that we feasted daily, we could afford to have our fancies. On foot I set out to find my dinner of horse-flesh, for that former law which had caused us so much trouble once before was no longer enforced, seeing that we had meat and provision in abundance and were but little likely to be tempted to do our steeds any harm.

I was but half come to the place where the dead mare lay when I came upon five Indians bearing fine cloths and other things toward the centre of the town. At sight of me they drew to one side of the road, but, as I came nearer, either the sight of my blond hair, or mine armour, put spurs to their fears, for they dropped what they were carrying and set off running toward the town.

Examining the things they had let fall, I found them to be mantles of a finer texture than any I had yet seen, so I changed my mind concerning my dinner

and took up the mantles to carry them to our quarters, but was not long upon the way when I met Juan Gordo coming towards me.

"How now, my friend? Whither away?" I cried.

"I am set upon playing the part of the ravens, Don Gonzálo, and am in search of carrion. An old sea-dog wearies soon of deer's flesh and craves other diet. Now that we are in the midst of plenty, I lust for change, like our first father in Eden. When I sailed with the Great Admiral——"

I cut him short,—“Let us make a compact, friend Juan. Take this stuff to camp and I will be butcher for both and bring meat for our mess.” The old man scratched his head and gazed doubtfully at the cloths.

"Where didst thou come by these, lad?" he presently enquired, "'and Samuel said unto Saul, what means the lowing of cattle and bleating of sheep that I hear?'"

"Thy head is filled with Scripture," I said, laughing, "but set thy mind at rest: the stuff is treasure trove, and will get no one in trouble."

Seeing the look of confidence on my face, the old mariner took up the bundle of mantles and turned back toward the town, whilst I kept on my way toward the carcase of the mare, which I cut to my liking, and then, binding the choicest bits I had selected in a piece of the hide, I slung it upon my shoulders and turned my steps toward the town, hastened by the blare of trumpets, the meaning of which I could in no wise understand, as we had already encamped for the night.

Stepping briskly with my load, which was no more to me than a chip in a basket, I soon came to the

centre of the town, and great was mine astonishment to find the roads leading into the square or market-place blocked with an eager crowd of natives, who effectually stopped my passage.

At a loss how to proceed, at last I made a detour, only to meet with the same want of success on every side, so I determined to push my way boldly through them, which I did, the half-naked savages giving way to my great shoulders and armoured chest.

After some delay, I came out upon the square where our little army was drawn up, and there I saw that something was amiss. Seated upon a block of wood and bound to a post in the centre of the square was a blindfolded soldier, whom I did not for the moment recognise.

Surrounded by a little group of the Captains, the General stood near by, and I could see that some matter was the subject of a heated discussion, although what it was I could not imagine.

Suddenly the little company scattered and I made out the forms of a half-dozen Indians that had hitherto been concealed behind them. The General stepped forward and seemed to give an order. At this moment I noticed one or two soldiers who stood near me, who were so intent on the central personages that my coming had not attracted their attention, but now they turned and nudged each other, and looked curiously at me. This I set down to the curious burden that I bore, and thought nothing more of it.

Glancing again at the principal actors in this drama, farce, or tragedy,—I knew not yet which to call it,—I saw the Chief Alguacil, Villalobos, step behind him who seemed to be condemned and make

as though he would twist at something which I could not see.

In an instant I tumbled to the reckoning and, turning to my neighbour, I begged him to say who it was that was put to the garrote and why.

The man looked at me pityingly, being a compassionate fellow, and answered: "I grieve to tell thee that it is thy comrade, Juan Gordo,—him of the Great Admiral,—for the matter of some mantles or such stuff. Had it been gold or emeralds it were perhaps worth while, but for these miserable cotton cloths——" And he left his sentence unsaid, shrugging his shoulders with unutterable abhorrence.

Scarce I heard a word beyond the name of my faithful friend. In an instant I had cried aloud, "Stay, officer, stay thy hand, in the name of justice!"

All turned to see me come as I bounded at mine utmost speed across the square and flung my bloody burden at the General's feet.

"Not guilty, your Excellency!" I cried. "Stay the execution! I can explain all."

The General lifted his hand, and the Alguacil made a rapid movement in an opposite direction, remarking dubiously, "I fear it is too late, your Excellency!"

The garrote relaxed, and the head of the victim fell forward on his breast. A dozen rushed to cut him loose and no effort was spared to revive him.

With hands still bloody from my butcher's work, I tore open his vest to give him air and dashed the water that was brought upon his face. No sigh nor fluttering lids responded to our efforts, nor did his protruding eyes move in their sockets. I placed

mine ear upon the old man's breast. His sands were run: his soul was sped, and thus died like his great chief, in noble ignominy, one who had sailed with the Great Admiral.

Sadly enough I gave over my task and bade them bear him to our quarters. In a few words I explained to the General how the mistake had occurred. A tear stood in the Licentiate's eye as he heard my story.

"Why did not the old man speak of this and why did he insist that he was guilty?" he repeated, helplessly, when I had made him acquainted with the facts. "The Indians protested that he was not their assailant, but Villalobos posted off as soon as they had made their complaint, and found him on the edge of the town, bearing the mantles. When he was accused of the crime, for a moment he seemed taken aback, and then admitted his guilt and asked no mercy, although all the Captains plead with me to spare him. Alas! that I should have blundered! Honest man and faithful friend! Would that I had many like thee!" and he turned away in sore affliction.

As for me, I cursed the hour that I had thought on horse-flesh, and there I left it lying, and the buzzards had their fill of it, for no one would touch it.

Mournfully I went to our quarters, and, at the break of day, we laid him away with military honours in a shallow grave upon a little hill near the town, and over it we put a large cross with his name and the device, "He sailed with the Great Admiral," which I cut with the point of my dagger.

A great gloom fell upon the camp, yet no doubt this severity saved the Indians from much future

annoyance, and our men from further punishment, but, at the time, it seemed hard that one who had come so far and suffered so many privations should thus die almost in sight of the end of our journey.

Finally we came upon a bit of rising ground, where, for the first time, the General had a full view of the great Sabána or Plateau of Bogotá.

This Sabána was about seven or eight leagues wide and fifteen long, walled about with high mountains, and so filled with cities, towns, and villages that it seemed like one great metropolis; with many large and beautiful buildings, especially the houses of the Caciques, which were all surrounded with palisades, which were made of great logs and interwoven with reeds, so that they might defy the weapons of the natives; although they would have been of no value against the great bronze cannon which we have in Spain.

At regular intervals about the stockades, which were square, the logs were left long, like masts, with cross-pieces like yards, and all dyed a bright red colour. As the General stood and looked at the sight, his memory went back to the land of his nativity and he called it the Valley of the Alcázares, but the name has already vanished with the habitations of the Indians, and it is now known only as the Sabána de Bogotá.

By this time the Indians had got wind of our real object in coming to the Americas and, all along the way as we came, they had hidden from us their riches as best they were able, so that it was with high hopes that we looked at the City before us and trusted that here we might have better fortune.

When I say the real object of our expedition, of course I mean that which was alone secondary to our desire to evangelise these idolaters; as it is well known that our prime object was to bear the Holy Cross to the ends of the earth, as is duly set forth in the commission of Don Pedro de Lugo, as well as in those of the other Conquistadores who came to these lands. Naturally we, the laity, gave somewhat more of our attention to the gold and emeralds, as the other matters pertained rather to the province of the good fathers who accompanied us, but I will maintain and sustain with my sword, if need be, that this matter was not neglected, so that in a few years after the conquest the few thousands who remained of the two millions or more who peopled the Sabána when first we came, were all duly baptised.

So well were their treasures hidden at the time that no man has ever found them to this day, nor those of the Cacique of Chía, which must have been very great, but the manner of the hiding was this: the Zaque chose some of his Captains in whom he had great confidence and to them he revealed the secret of certain caves in the mountains and sent them to wait not far from the place: he then sent his treasure with one hundred Indians, by tens, to leave it with the Captains and slew each ten as they returned, and, at last, when the two faithful officers returned, he paid them in the same coin, so that the secret was his alone as before. And, really, this is much the best way to keep a secret!

In spite of all this, they were not niggardly about food, and gave us far more than we could use, whilst they hid the gold and jewels, which were of much

less use to them. In fact, so lavishly did they provender us that there were days when they sent a carcase of a deer for each man amongst us.

As we afterwards learned, all this was done that we might not be inclined to press on to the City of Bogotá, but, if this was all that prompted them, they might well have spared themselves their pains, for we were but little inclined to stop short when so near the culmination of our enterprise.

The last place we stopped before entering Bogotá was Suba, where a most notable event occurred, for the Cacique of Suba, who received us in a most friendly fashion, was taken ill with a mortal distemper. When, therefore, the good fathers who were with us saw this, they became straightway convinced that Providence had permitted them to reach the place at this time in order that they might present the Gospel to him. Accordingly, with the leave of the General, they went to the old man with an interpreter and first they rigged themselves out in their vestments, which had come with our baggage, and burned some incense, which had come from Spain and was not like the vile stinking stuff which the Jeques burned. Then, with Book and muttered Latin, they drove out the Evil One from the chamber of the dying chieftain.

The old man watched them through his fast glazing eyes with huge satisfaction. With broken voice, he enquired of the interpreter:

“Will the Medicine Men of the Children of the Sun drive away the Spirit of Evil which hath laid hold on me?”

The interpreter repeated his question to Padre Antonio.

"Tell him that it is for the healing of his soul that we are come," replied the priest.

The next question came at once, "And when will the healing come?"

"At once, if thou wilt accept baptism and yield thyself to the One Church," was the reply.

"What is baptism?" was the query.

"The touching with water, oil, and salt, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity," was the explanation.

A light lit up the face of the dying man. "Only that?" he exclaimed. "Tell them to go on!"

A message was sent to the General, and, a few moments later, all our little army, save the sentinels, crowded into the great chamber where the Cacique lay a-dying.

"Haste! Haste!" the dying man feebly exclaimed once or twice, and, when the interpreter told it to Padre Antonio, he answered:

"'Tis a momentous occasion. The first baptism in the New Kingdom and that a King. We must observe it fitly."

All this while the soldiers were crowding in and bringing great bundles of rolls of bark or parchment, on which were strange figures or letters in the language of the Indians, and piling them in the great fireplace.

After this they brought in many small idols, some of wood, some of gold, and some of earthenware. When all was ready the priest approached the dying man. It seemed that it was too late, but, after the interpreter had spoken twice or thrice without eliciting a reply, the chieftain at last feebly opened his

lips and murmured: "I die. The remedy is of no avail."

"Thou shalt live again!" cried Father Antonio, in a loud voice, and, at the sound, the Cacique opened his eyes, while the interpreter spoke to him.

At the command of the priest, one of the soldiers thrust a torch, which he had ready, into the mass of heathen documents, and Fray Domingo guided the feeble hands of him who was but little more than a corpse, while he tore one of them in twain as a token of renunciation of all such deviltry. Then he placed an earthen idol in his hand, from whence it rolled upon the floor and was broken in fragments.

"So perish all the works of the Evil One!" cried Padre Antonio, in a loud voice, and proceeded to baptise him who had just renounced his former works of darkness.

The flames of the great fire lit up the whole room with a weird and flickering light, and, as it died down, we cast in the idols of wood and smashed those of clay upon the ground, only those of gold we put aside, to be melted into ingots and stamped with the cross that should redeem them to righteous service.

By this time the chieftain had passed away and was gone to glory, with such delay as might be necessary in Purgatory to free him from the last stains and chains of idolatry.

This, then, was the first convert of the New Kingdom of Granada and the first fruits of our arduous labours and terrible trials.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHIBCHA CAPITAL

AT Suba we were delayed for a week, and then proceeded on our way to Bogotá with no other stop between that town and the capital.

Of all our actions the Zaque's spies kept him well informed, and he immediately prepared to flee with his harem and goods whilst we were delayed in crossing the Funza, which was swollen with the winter rains, (for so do we call the season of storms, although there is really no winter in this country), and a large body of Indians resisted our passage, in order that the Prince might make good his escape, which he did; for, when we got to his abode in the city, we found it deserted, and therefore took possession of the sumptuous apartments, which far surpassed all the houses of his vassal caciques in splendour.

All the idols and writings of their devil worship we collected and burned as we had done at Suba, for Padre Antonio would spare none, save only the gold.

We were told that there were some three hundred of the Zaque's women, and this need trouble no one to believe, for we read in the third book of the Kings, chapter ten,* that the Great Monarch had seven hundred queens as wives and three hundred concubines

* The Spanish denominate I Samuel as I Kings; II Samuel as II Kings; I Kings as III Kings and II Kings as IV Kings.

besides, which altogether casts the Zaque in the shade. But, as for that, if any one thinketh the number great, let him take from it what he may deem fitting and leave the Zaque such a number as may seem to him suitable, for we could not come at them to count them, nor at his treasure to weigh it; nor could we learn from his followers aught of their whereabouts, although our General very sensibly put some of them to the torture to come at the truth.

Although we could not find the Zaque, he evidently had news of us, for his followers tried their best to dislodge us from the City, and annoyed us incessantly, both day and night, with their attacks.

Diego and I were lodged together in one wing of the palace, while our friends were separated from us. Olahla cared for our larder and saw that it was well provided, and looked to the cooking also, although we had an old woman as her companion and helper.

The siege had lasted several days, with continual attacks from the enemy, and darts and javelins flying over us or dropping upon the roofs of the houses, without ceasing. Many of them were tipped with fire in order to light the roofs and burn us out of the fort, and, although we were well supplied with food from the stores in the palace, it was anything but pleasant to be on foot day and night to guard against danger by attack and fire, and to listen to the incessant howling of the tens of thousands of savages who surrounded our little band.

So, as I say, we had endured this thing for several days when, one night, there was a cessation of the battle and a withdrawal of their forces, and, shortly afterwards, there came against us a large

body of the Indians, formed in battle-array. At sight of them our people set forth from the palisades with the cavalry, in order that we might fall upon them in the open and do them the greater hurt.

This was just what they desired us to do, and immediately they commenced to retreat, whilst a large body of them, that had remained concealed, came secretly with fire-brands against that wing of the palace where we were lodged, and would have burned it to the ground had not the quick ear of Olahla heard them coming in time so that she could run and warn Captain Manrique, who had remained behind with a dozen men for the defence of the place. The Captain called his men and rushed to the point of danger, where he found the roof already in flames.

Had the Indians not had such a deadly fear of the Spanish valour, and had they at once attacked our men, all must have fallen ere help could have arrived, and the place would then have been burned and lost to us, but, instead, they stood about and threw darts at our men as they were occupied in tearing off the burning thatch and throwing it upon the ground, and at last the fire was extinguished. Then it was that the valiant wretch who commanded the little company must have bethought him of the girl who had saved them, and remembered that she was alone in the house during the absence of Diego and myself, for he posted his men at different points to watch the savages, and set out to find her. Whether he conceived a base passion for the maid, or was desirous of showing his malice and spite to us, I know not, but the first thing Olahla knew, he had come upon her suddenly out of the darkness of a passage-way.

"My good girl," he said, in his smoothest tones, "a thousand thanks for the service of thy quick ears. All is quiet now and we may rest and chat awhile. Sit upon this bench, I pray, and let me speak with thee and thank thee fittingly."

Olahla drew herself up proudly, and moved somewhat away from the bench, saying: "Olahla do her duty, your mercy, and need no thanks. As for sitting, Olahla have much to do, and must be about it without delay."

The girl was no stranger to our aversion and distrust of the Captain, and made as though she would leave the room, but Manrique placed himself in the doorway and detained her.

"Stay, stay, pretty one,—not so fast!" he cried. "Let us be good friends! Do thou take this bit of a jewel as a pledge of mine esteem;" and, as he spoke, he twisted a trinket from a gold chain that he wore,—relic of his ancient finery.

The girl drew back, shook her head, and moved away, as though she gave over the contest and would remain. Seeing this, the Captain dropped his arm from the doorway and, like a flash, she made a quick dart to go past him. Cleverly as it had been done, the active young man was too quick for her, and, catching her by the wrist as she passed, he stopped her suddenly, cruelly wrenching her arm as he did so.

"Nay, nay!" he cried, with an evil and triumphant smile; "not so fast, not so fast,—as I said before. I will take toll of all who pass, with a kiss;" and he forced her toward him with his iron grip and drew down her protecting arm from her face with his other hand.

"Take this salute then as thy toll, vile knave!"

cried a voice of thunder, and the flat of Diego's blade fell on his bent back with a cordial ring.

"Unhand that girl and look to thyself, that I lay not thy carcase here for the *gallinazos'* carrion feast!"

The Captain drew with incredible alacrity at the sound of his enemy's voice, and was on guard in an instant. Then came the clash of steel and sparks from two blades in the dark passage. Diego could but defend himself, and that with difficulty, for he came back to the palace with a severe wound from a spear, and could but just stand on his feet. He had sought the girl at once to get the healing balsam which she carried, and had come upon Manrique in the doorway.

Little by little the Captain forced him back, step by step, along the passage, and, as he saw the other's weakness more apparent, his own confidence returned, for he was not Diego's match when the other's body was sound.

Little by little Diego fell back, and once he stumbled, and once his adversary touched him. The light of the fire through the doorway fell upon Manrique's face and showed a cruel smile, with his beautiful gleaming teeth, white like those of a wolf, between his half-parted lips. Like the knave that he was, he fell to taunting the other as he grew more sure of himself.

"Doth the factor's son not fence like a gentleman, friend Diego?" he asked, in irony, lessening himself that he might the more deeply wound the other.

"Ay, but his deeds cry out that he is none," replied Diego, with a smile of scorn; "thou canst not

make a silken purse from ear of swine, neither canst thou make a gentleman of a base-born cur."

"At least thy blood is mixt with mine, for I sired thy cousin's whelps," retorted Manrique, thinking to cut him to the quick with the remembrance.

"And thus laid me in thy debt forevermore," rejoined the hidalgo. "Thou canst not touch me there, although thou mayst with thy sword. 'Ware! 'Ware!" he cried, in warning. "Girl, leave off! I fight in fair and open combat, and need not thy help."

Diego was too late and, ere the Captain could turn, which he did but slowly, suspecting a trick or ruse from Diego, the girl had thrown a large mantle of cotton cloth over his head, enveloping him, and entangling his sword-arm in its folds. In an instant she was upon her knees beside Diego, who had swooned from loss of blood and had fallen full length upon the ground. Hastily tearing a bit of her robe, she commenced to dress and bind up the wound which the spear had made, whilst the Captain struggled to disembarrass himself of the mantle and picked up his fallen sword. Glancing about him for a moment in bewilderment, he made out his foe stretched helpless upon the ground, and rushed upon him to run him through with his blade as he lay there all unconscious.

Olahla screamed at the sight, and flung herself upon Diego's breast, and her scream guided me to them as I returned from the sortie, weary with the fray, but with the fire of battle still throbbing in my veins.

In a moment I sprang forward out of the darkness, and knocked up Manrique's sword that hung

threateningly over the prostrate forms, seeking an opening that might let out the life of the one and touch not the other.

I warrant the blow stung and smarted in the palm of his sword-hand, for he sprang back with an ugly oath and held his hand from him for a moment, as if benumbed; then he stood on guard, for he cared not to brave my long reach and iron wrist. Steel struck sharply against steel and I kept him there under my hand, as it were, while I asked the girl whether Diego lived, and how the matter stood.

"Yes, yes, Don Diego,—he live!" she cried, joyfully. "You kill that beast, that snake, that toad! I take care of Don Diego." Poor girl, she knew not swine or she would have called him that.

"Hath he hurt you, girl?" I asked.

"No, no,—I kill him first. He not good to live."

"Very well, Olahla. I shall see if I can oblige you," I replied, with my best effort at a facetious manner; "I care not much to foul my blade with the corrupt blood of toads or swine. Swine, girl! Mark you! That is a vile beast that thou knowest not. One that loveth to wallow in the mire and eat filth, the stench of which is a great offence to the nostrils. We shall say swine, as well as toad;" and with this I prodded at him, and the girl laughed merrily now that the spell was turned against the wizard.

"Yes, yes! Swine! Very good. He very much swine. Be careful, Don Gonzálo,—you spill he bad blood on ground,—make dirty!" The girl giggled at her own wit, and I laughed, too, and drove the wretch about the place at my will, playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse.

All intent on our own concerns, I noted not the

approach of others, until, suddenly, the General stepped out of the darkness and cried out to us to lay down our weapons. "How now, brawling knaves! Have ye not wearied of blood-letting? What meaneth this crossing of blades?"

Like a flash the Captain turned and sprang towards him out of range of my sword-point.

"Your Excellency," he cried, "you are well come, indeed. I but now returned from the defence of the house when these two set upon me secretly, and would have had my life had I not lain one of them upon the ground, and held mine own with the other."

"'Tis thou, Manrique. I thank my fortune that I have come in time. Who, then, are these others? What, Cabrera and Alarcón! Valiant men, 'tis true, but not of the strictest loyalty. I have somewhat upon the records against both, although I had well-nigh overlooked it."

"'Tis an ancient grudge he hath against me," said the ready liar, Manrique, pointing at Diego, who was but now coming to himself under the ministrations of Olahla, "because I once blocked an evil design he had upon another's wealth."

"Say, then, that thou hast the wealth as thy reward," interrupted Diego, in an unsteady voice.

By this time many of the soldiers had crowded about us and the General commanded Villalobos, the Chief Alguacil, to take us both into custody until he could adjudge our case in the morning.

At this I, who had been standing silent, leaning upon my sword, stepped forward and mechanically raised my blade to call attention. The General mistook the gesture and sprang back, hastily. In a moment all was confusion. Three or four sprang be-

tween us, and the General gave order to disarm me.

In reply I handed my sword to Villalobos and cried out: "Your Excellency! Place this man also in custody, and I am content to wait until the morning for justice, but let him go free and——"

"And what, varlet? Dost thou seem to threaten us? Away with him and we shall see if we are to receive commands from such as he!"

With this he turned his back and went away, whilst Villalobos led us to a strong room, in which he locked us for the night, leaving a sentinel without.

Thus it ever was with the General: evil counsel and his fiery and impatient temper had alienated his confidence from us. We long had known that Manrique plotted against us in secret, and he had much to commend him,—valour and knightly bearing,—for all his base blood and origin, and a most plausible and ingenious tongue. Nevertheless, we had relied upon our known valour and services to see us safe through all his intrigues, and had given but little heed to many warnings that had come to us from time to time.

Great as was the General in dark hours and adversity, the turn of the wheel ever seemed to weaken his judgment. His was a nature that could not stand prosperity, as the future was to show most sadly.

CHAPTER XV

THE REFUGEES

THE room in which we were placed was barren of all furnishing save a mat of woven rushes that lay upon the floor. This we made out by the scant light of a young moon that came through the barred windows, together with a flickering ray from the court without when the meagre fire at which the sentry warmed himself took hold now and again upon a fresh bit of faggot and leaped into life for a moment. Diego hung heavily upon mine arm, and I made him lie and rest upon the mat, whilst I gave a turn about the room.

They had put us in an apartment opening on the great interior court, where a sentinel paced up and down throughout the night. In the corridor, into which the room opened, I could hear another sentinel, pacing slowly up and down, and could even hear him yawn with sleep and weariness. Sentinels slept not often with Quesada in command of the army, so it was not likely that he would leave off his monotonous marching to and fro and back again, until relieved by his successor. How our comrades must have cursed us for this extra duty!

The side walls were made of thick mud, laid upon woven bamboo frames, and might be cut through in time, could the work be done silently, but we should only find ourselves in the adjoining room, after our work was finished. The window was barred with

iron-wood slats tied with withes to the frame on the outside, at a distance from the opening itself, so that no one could loosen them from within. Having no nails, the Alguacil Mayor had contrived this means to close his prison. Should we escape through the window, we had the open, lighted court to cross, and then the gates to gain and pass, only to find ourselves amongst the Indians, our worst enemies.

No, there was naught to do but submit and take what justice we might receive, for, though each one knows about himself, 'tis God alone knows about all of us. At present a bit of supper would have been well appreciated, as the attack had taken us from our dinners ere the first bit of food crossed our lips.

I flung myself upon the mat beside Diego and asked him how he did.

"Well enough," he replied, "had I a flask of good spirits and a bit to set my teeth on. The marvellous balsam of the maid hath staunched the flow of blood and drawn out what little pain there was, but the front and the back sides of my belly are fast becoming glued together for lack of a bit of food to hold them apart."

I laughed,—“So that's where the pig's tail twists? Well,—there is something of the same sort the matter with me. Yet, console thyself, friend, for the lack of the spirit, seeing that the ardent liquor would put fever in thy wounds. As for the food,—who sleeps, dines. Turn over and dream of a banquet!” Suiting the action to the word, I stretched myself beside him, and composed myself to sleep. Evidently his philosophy was like mine, for soon I heard him breathing heavily, and felt assured that he slept.

Mine own eyes were heavy, but I could not sleep

for a time, and, by-and-by, I heard a tap-tapping at the window, as though a little bird pecked at the sash. The sound mingled with the queer conceits that flickered through my drowsy brain, and for a time I gave it no heed. Suddenly it stopped, and this awoke me.

Oft have I slept by the battle-field, with the crash of muskets and the roar of cannon for my lullaby, and heeded it not, but the stopping of the infernal concert ever awoke me. Sitting up, I looked about, and then saw a shadow at the window.

"Hist!" said a low voice, and an arm was thrust through the bars, bearing some roots of roasted cassava and a large gourd full of *chicha*, which is a fermentation of pounded maize, very wholesome and strengthening and as comforting to the stomach as a good flagon of ale.

Seizing the food, I detained the hand also for a moment in mine and knew it to be Olahla's. Pressing it warmly, I released the girl with a whispered word of thanks and turned to awaken Diego, knowing that he would forgive me readily at sight of the food.

Just at that moment there came a sharp call of "*Quién vive?*" from the sentinel in the square, and the shadow of Olahla disappeared from the window. Following the challenge, I heard a sound of voices in conversation and, looking from the window, saw some one speaking with the sentinel on the other side of the court.

By this time Diego was awake and touched me on the arm. I spoke to him and explained what was afoot and, at the sound of our voices, the sentry before the inner door paused in his walking to and

fro, and listened for a moment ere he resumed his march. We paid no attention to him, but conversed in tones too low to reach his ear as more than an indistinct murmur of words, while, between sentences, we munched our yuca and drank deep draughts of the *chicha*, which made new men of us.

For some moments the voices had ceased in the court, when, suddenly, a shadow darkened the window again and some one gently called me by name.

"Who is there?" I whispered, approaching the bars.

"'Tis I, Gonzálo Suárez Rondón," replied the voice, and I recognised it at once as that of Captain Suárez, a brave and loyal soldier, and faithful friend.

"Speak low, my Captain," I said, "for we have a sentry at our door. What brings you here at this untoward hour?"

"'Tis but to warn thee that thine enemy sleepeth not. He hath the ear of the General and hath won his confidence by some art or wizard's spell. As for me, I trust him not, and have said as much to his Excellency."

"Thanks, good friend," I replied, "but our services in the past surely count for something with the General."

"Count they ought, 'tis true. Yet I misdoubt me much that this is a matter for the garrote. Remember the fate of Juan Gordo! Is it like that one who raised his sword against the General's person will escape?"

"I raised not my sword against him, Captain Suárez," I exclaimed, "as thou well knowest! 'Twas a mere gesture and signified nothing."

"I know! I know! Thou art not one to com-

mit thyself to such an act of folly, even hadst thou the desire to touch his Excellency. But there is a plot against thee of those whom envy or malice makes thine enemies. Manrique will not rest without the lives of both of ye, and is like to have his way, although the General liketh not to reduce his force by two blades such as thine and Don Diego's. Nevertheless, Manrique hath woven such a tissue of calumny that he who trieth to break it may break himself in the attempt.

"I left the General hot with wrath and the Captain is, doubtless, filing his tongue to stir him up yet more. Ye know his white rage; it is not pleasant to cross him in it: so I came away to tell ye to collect what evidence ye can to make good your innocence and, if I can serve ye in aught, I am to command in your service. So speak freely and I shall do what I can, but I would ye were safe out of the business."

"Thanks again, comrade. A pretty mess it is in truth. Stand by the window for a moment whilst we turn the case over in our minds and we shall give thee our resolution presently."

Diego and I consulted together for a moment in a low tone, and agreed that the case was desperate. The General's temper and quick justice were known to all, and we might be eaten by the worms long before our innocence was established. Our resolution was, therefore, soon taken and the question arose whether or not we should confide in Suárez. Our hearts were full of gratitude to the brave fellow for daring the General's wrath and warning us, and we knew that it had not been a light matter for him to silence the sentinel. What it had cost him in gold

or emeralds to purchase his silence we did not know, nor was the Captain at all likely to tell us.

We decided not to burden him further with our case, although we trusted him perfectly, so I approached the window again, and told him that our resolution was now taken, but, greatly as we were indebted to him, we would not see him further involved in the matter, but only asked him to send the girl to the window if he could find her and, if not, to let the matter be; but always to remember, whatever happened, that no one in the army was more faithful to the General than ourselves, and to speak a friendly word for us when he might be able.

The Captain agreed most readily, but seemed somewhat concerned lest we take some rash step. As to this we reassured him and he took himself off.

Hardly had he disappeared when the girl came again to the window. I asked her if Captain Suárez had sent her. She said "No," but that she had been hidden all the time waiting in the shadow until he should be gone.

I then passed her my dagger and bade her cut the withes that bound the iron-wood bars to the window, for I had put them there myself for Villalobos to improvise a prison for some Indian captives, and I knew the manner of their arrangement. At the same time I cautioned her against letting the bars fall or making any noise, however small, lest it should attract the attention of one or another sentinel.

'Twas something like casting salt into the sea to give such advice to the quick-witted girl, and I knew it as I spoke, yet man is ever prone to thrust his

opinions on those about him as better than their own.

The knife was sharp, but the dried and seasoned withes, which had been soft and green when I put them on, were well-nigh as hard as the iron-wood itself. At last I felt the bar loosen beneath my hand, although I heard not a sound, and a moment later it was gently lowered to the ground. In a short time a second bar disappeared and the way was now open for us to reach the court.

The moon had long since disappeared, but the fitful light of the fire rose and fell, causing the shadows to come and disappear deceitfully, with its changing brightness.

Leaving our armour behind us, we slipped noiselessly through the aperture, and crouched low upon the ground, keeping close to the wall of the house. For arms we each had a dagger, and for defence I still had my shirt of mail, which seldom left my body. Lifting one of the iron-wood bars, I bore it with us as a weapon in case of need and, cautiously, we crawled on all-fours close to the building and well in the shadow, to make our way about the court. The only door that led out of it opened through the far angle of the square, nigh to the sentry's fire, and through this we must pass to make good our escape and reach the outer space within the palisade. After accomplishing that, we must in some way surmount this, in order to finally find ourselves free of the place.

Once the sentry looked our way and shaded his eyes with his hand, as though he had seen a moving shadow which had no excuse for existence, but no danger was expected from within, and he doubtless

thought our imprisonment a matter of a slight infringement of discipline, and judged that we were asleep long before, so, presently, he recommenced his pacing up and down.

With added caution we advanced, and soon came so near to the fire that it seemed that we must be seen, but we had already calculated the chance and felt assured that the shadow was deep enough to shield us. We went confidently on, and at last we safely reached the door, or gate, when, to our bitter disappointment, we found that it was closed from without, and the sentry himself was a prisoner.

There we stood like fools and criminals at once, gaping at the great door and then at the sentinel, but, suddenly, the latter turned and came quickly toward us, sword in hand, and looking intently in our direction.

We were lost, indeed, if discovered, and lost as well if not discovered, so, in our desperation, I raised the heavy bar in my powerful arms and drove it through the darkness full upon the breast-plate of the soldier.

There was a crash of steel and a wild cry of terror and pain as the man fell full-length upon the ground and lay there stunned. Ere I could repent of my folly, we heard the sounds of voices here and there and footsteps hurrying to and fro, and, in another instant, the door flew open and the passage showed a crowd of our companions, sword in hand, and bearing torches to lighten the place.

Leaping to the fallen sentinel, I snatched his sword and sprang to face them, thinking this a better death for a soldier than to be strangled by the garrote. The men hesitated to come within the range

of my circling blade, when, suddenly, I felt some one plucking me by the sleeve. I turned my head the least bit and saw Olahla.

"Don Gonzálo," she whispered, "drive them back and shut the door with the bar. Get away through window of friend."

"Good enough for thee, Olahla!" I cried. "Here! Stand back, *canalla!* Would ye hunt a free man to his death?" and I made such a furious onset that they all fell back like the army of Xerxes before Leonidas and huddled together in the passage.

"Now, girl,—quick! Get the bar!"

She was by my side in an instant with the heavy bar, and I jumped back and slammed the door in their faces, thrusting one end of the bar deep into the ground as I could, and the other under a cleat on the door.

I knew it was but a moment's respite, for armed men already began to drop through various windows into the court and come toward us, but they were without torches and the fire was now so low that they could scarce tell friend from foe. The girl quickly led me by the hand under the window of the room which was used by our friends, and there I found Diego waiting for me. A voice from above came to mine ears and I recognised Juan de Dios.

"Juan," I cried, "give me a hand down and lay hold on Diego!"

Putting forth all my strength, I seized him by the waist and lifted him high above my head, for these windows were much higher than those upon the other side. In an instant I was relieved of the weight and he was drawn up by strong arms into the room.

I then passed the girl up in the same way and followed myself, over the body of Molina, who hung from the window by his hands that I might lay hold on him and climb him like a ladder. Just as my legs disappeared and they were pulling Pedro into the room, the gate gave way with a crash and a crowd of soldiers poured into the court, lighting up the place with their torches, and running hither and thither in search of us. No time was to be lost! As soon as they found that we were not in the court, they would commence to search the building.

I was for opening the door at once and making a rush for the palisade, but Juan de Dios dissuaded me. Glancing up, he pointed to the rafters of the roof over our heads. "Up with ye, and be quick about it!" he cried. "Cut your way out through the thatch and make for the palisade over the roof!"

No sooner said than done, and up I went in an instant and fell to work upon the thatch, which gave way rapidly before the powerful cross cut of my sharp dagger. Soon we could see the stars in the sky outside, and also hear the cries of our comrades as they made sure that we were not in the patio. By this we knew that the search would soon begin inside and it behooved us to be off.

In a moment more Diego stood by my side and I passed him first and then the girl through the hole in the roof, telling them to lie flat until I reached them, but, preparing to follow them, I found that Juan de Dios and Pedro were mounting also, ready to accompany us.

"Nay, nay, good friends," I expostulated, "ye can but lessen our chances of escape and aid us not

one whit. Remain here and care for our reputation and honour until we can return again."

"'Tis true that many cooks spoil the pudding," assented Molina, regretfully, "but there is another saw, which I do not recall, that giveth us reason to believe that four blades are better than two, be the two even such famous ones as thine and Don Diego's there."

"'Tis not a question of blades, man! We are to win away by our wits and not by our hands. So take our hearty thanks and let us go!"

"Be it so, then, and may the Saints go with ye!"

I wrung the hands of both of them and mounted to the thatch, and, thereupon, all three of us began to crawl along it toward the corner of the quadrangle, where there were some beams which extended from the main building to the palisade, to serve as stays, or braces, and along these we hoped to pass and drop to safety without.

To our dismay, we heard a shout go up from the patio: "To the roof! To the roof! They are crawling overhead!"

In a moment all eyes were turned toward the roof, and, by the light of many torches, we could easily be seen making our way along it. There was but little use now in crawling, so Diego called out, "Run for your lives! Run!" and, springing to his feet, set the example and ran along the broad strip of thatch which crowned the ridge of the roof.

Immediately our comrades, who were become our enemies, began casting missiles of all sorts at us, because they had no powder for their muskets, as I have said before. Most of the missiles passed us, for we were but a flying mark in the darkness, yet

some of them struck us, but did not stay us in our course, although they bruised us sorely.

Diego ran first, and so I called to him to know if he could pass at full speed and jump from the palisade, a height of about six varas. He replied that he had no choice, and, leaving the roof at the angle, ran out upon the beam at full speed, although a dozen swords and spears were thrust up to stop him. In an instant he went flying out into the darkness, over the palisade, and I close on his heels. I felt a couple of cuts in the legs as I passed, and then I fell into the night, and struck hard upon the bodies of a dozen dead Indians that were piled up where they had fallen in the early evening. A moment later Olahla fell beside me, and I called to Diego to know if he were hurt.

"Hurt? Not I. But I have not breath to tell thee," he exclaimed.

"Then save thy breath to propel thy legs and let us be off," I answered. "How is it with thee, Olahla?"

"Me do very well. Come down hard, but have got legs, all right."

"Then let us be off!" I cried, again, and all three of us got upon our feet and made off into the darkness at the same moment that the palace gates opened and a company of soldiers, with arms and torches, sallied forth to take us.

On,—on we ran into the night until, suddenly, we brought up together by crashing through some bushes and falling into a great hole of some sort, where we lay still because we had breath to go no further, although we were none of us hurt.

Looking up, we could see the stars above us

through a network of brush, and even see the glare of the torches as the soldiers tramped back and forth in a half-hearted endeavour to find us. Once, indeed, they beat the very bushes beneath which we lay, and one of them cried out that there was a hole or pit in their midst, so that we gave ourselves over for lost.

“Look out lest thou fall into it, and come away!” called out a voice, which we recognised at once as that of Captain Suárez, and then he bade the men hunt elsewhere whilst he gave a glance at the pit. With that he thrust his torch in our faces and cried out, “There is naught here that we want! Have a look at yon hut!” and went off with his men.

That he saw us plainly I believed at the time to be true, and I afterwards learned that it was even so, but the brave fellow would not betray us.

When we saw that we were free to depart, Olahla got upon her feet and vanished in the darkness. In about an hour’s time she returned and told us to follow her. Picking our way in the night, we soon reached a hut somewhat larger than the ordinary abode of the Indians, but not so pretentious as that of a chief.

Speaking a word at the door, we were permitted to enter, and found ourselves in a spacious apartment hung about with odd garments of all sorts and many queer things with whose use I was not familiar, and the whole place was pervaded with the vile odour of their moque or incense.

Only one person besides ourselves appeared to be present, and this was a venerable Indian of dignified demeanour and a most intelligent countenance. To him Olahla spoke in the language of her own people,

which he understood, being a jeque, or wise man, who had spent many years amongst them.

When they had talked together for a few moments, looking frequently at us, the old man came to us and examined us as though we were strange beasts, stroking our hair and skin and looking into our eyes. With Diego he seemed well satisfied, but when he came to me he shook his head doubtfully and commenced to talk again with Olahla.

The girl looked at me, and then spoke rapidly and warmly, whilst the old man listened with attention, and then shook his head again as before and shrugged his shoulders.

At this Olahla's eyes flashed and she stamped her foot imperiously upon the ground in anger, saying something in such a commanding tone that I was amazed, for I had never seen her thus before.

The effect on the old man was instantaneous. Going to a basket that hung against the wall, he proceeded to produce certain pigments and other things, of which I knew not the use. He then selected sundry garments from the stock upon the wall, and set to work first on Diego and afterwards on me. Diego's hair was straight and black as any Indian's, and his eyes were as dark as night, while his skin was burned with the sun and wind until it needed only a little touching off with a pigment to be as like any native's as two peas in a pod. After he had made his face into an Indian's, the Jeque passed to the matter of his garb, and soon fitted him with sandals and cotton garments so that he might pass any inspection.

With me the Jeque's task was more difficult. In the first place my stature far exceeded that of any

ordinary native, and my blond hair and blue eyes did not readily lend themselves to a disguise. Nevertheless, the old man set about it and, having dyed my hair and eyebrows a glossy black, he rubbed some ill-smelling stuff upon my beard, which presently came away, leaving my skin like a girl's, after which he stained my scalp, face, neck, and arms, and also my legs and feet. Having warned me through Olahla of the necessity of keeping mine eyes down, he then fitted me with clothes as he had Diego. Olahla needed nothing but to make her garments conform more to the Bogotá fashion. The old man gave her some pigments with which to keep our disguises in order, and some small store of food, which I carried, and we took leave of him, lest the break of day come ere we should get clear of the town.

My sword I left with the Jeque, and asked him to return it to its owner, which he promised to do: we then slipped through the silent streets and ascended the slope back of the town, as the morning broke.

From our post upon the hill-top we saw the streets laid out beneath us: the palace where our comrades defied the armies of the Zaque, and, farther away, the mist of the morning rolled upon the Sabána like great white billows, whilst a lighter vapour blew with the freshening breeze against the mountain-sides, or crowded through the passes and over the tops of the ridges.

An awful sense of loneliness fell upon us as we gazed. Two lone strangers in disguise, and in peril of their lives, and an Indian maid to guide them! Whither should we set out, and what should be our

future: what, indeed, had we to hope for under such circumstances? Were we mad to set forth thus to find our way over well-travelled roads, and through populous towns and cities, where we might call no man friend, nor even speak to any one else than the girl, until we should be again united to our friends?

CHAPTER XVI

EL DORADO

OUR plan was simple and complex at the same time, because of its simplicity. We were to seek Olahla's tribe and kin, where, she assured us, we could compel a welcome, because of the obligation of hospitality, through which her kin were bound by a native law to serve us.

Our destination was a place called Sugamuxi, or Sogomoso as the Spaniards call it, and we must be several days on the journey ere we could hope to reach it. Of the road Olahla, unfortunately, could tell us nothing definite, excepting that the old man at Guachetá knew her people and would guide her; so we must make our way to Guachetá and there find the old man who had been sent down bound for a cannibal feast for us, and whom we had liberated and presented with a bonnet and shirt.

We sat down and talked a long time, and looked, as we feared, for the last time on the place where our comrades abode. Then we turned our backs resolutely on the City and, with a pang in our hearts, made off toward the north and Guachetá.

As the sun rose higher and grew brighter, I noticed an anxious look on Olahla's face, and we had not proceeded far on our way until I caught her regarding me curiously once or twice, but finally she nodded her head and smiled. As I wondered what this could mean, we presently came to a copse grow-

ing by the wayside, where she looked about a bit and selected a straight-growing sapling and bade me cut it with my dagger and supply myself with a staff.

The idea seemed to me to be good, as we were almost without weapons, and, when I had finished it, I cut one for Diego also and then prepared to go on my way, but Olahla, laughing, bade me curve my back and cast mine eyes upon the ground and use my staff to feel my way along the road, like a blind-man.

"Don Gonzálo, you eye all blue like blind eye and now you got skin all brown like Olahla. I see blind-man much times got white eye, blue eye like Don Gonzálo. Olahla or Don Diego lead: you bend down like blind-man. No see nothing. Then we not get caught."

"Holy Virgin, child!" I cried, "my back will break and I shall die of weariness long before night."

"Very good," she replied, demurely pouting, "no matter. Will die some other way if no can do it. Then we die too,—but that no matter;" and she assumed an air of indifference.

"Is it as bad as that, Olahla? Have thy will, then, and double me up in what shape thou wilt! Here, how will this do?" and I felt before me on the ground with my staff and tried to look about with the vacant, unseeing glance of the blind.

Olahla laughed and Diego pronounced me a born play-actor, but the play was as nearly like work as anything that has come to my hand before or since, for Olahla insisted on my keeping up the farce continuously lest we be seen from a distance, and she and Diego took turns leading me, or else I rested my hand on the shoulder of one or the other.

Thus we passed single Indians or little groups of them coming and going. Our disguises were evidently effective, for they paid but little attention to us, and we continued on our way unmolested. At midday we ate sparingly of our scanty provender and went on. The road was broad and fairly level and, at times, the passengers were numerous. When they spoke to us, Olahla answered in her own language and they took us to be strangers passing from one tribe to another, or else upon a religious pilgrimage, which was common amongst them. When night fell our severest trial began. I was free to straighten out my back until daylight, but soon the cold mist fell upon us and we huddled close for warmth and munched our frugal supper. During the night we caught snatches of sleep, but were glad indeed to welcome the King of Day as he rose over the hills. No wonder that the inhabitants of these chilly uplands worship him!

Thus for three days we retraced the route our little army had followed, and at last we came to Guachetá without untoward accident.

Olahla had stained the blond roots of my hair, which were now beginning to show themselves again, and touched up my dusky complexion with some of the pigments that she had brought, and we entered the town in search of the old man of her people.

It was not difficult to get news of him, because he had become celebrated by his adventure with our army, but, alas! for our hopes, he had passed away and been gathered to his fathers some days before we reached the place.

Our food was now all gone, and we knew not how

to secure more without awakening suspicion. As it was, those whom Olahla had found that spoke a little of her language, had seemed to wonder that she was always the spokesman or spokeswoman. She told them that I was dumb as well as blind, and Diego was forced to play the man in a bad temper to piece out our little comedy lest it become a tragedy.

As we went about the town seeking some one that knew the road to Olahla's people and could speak her language, for she said that she had lost her way, there attached himself to us a most unprepossessing person, who was a sort of hanger-on, or attendant, of the jeque, or priest, of the place, and this fellow, who spoke some words of Olahla's language, seemed to be greatly interested in our affairs, sticking as close to us as he need, and somewhat closer, although Olahla told him that we required him not.

Thus he followed us about from place to place, and from house to house, on our quest, and gave us no little anxiety with his persistence. Suddenly, as we passed the house of his patron, who stood before the door observing us, he stooped and laid hold of a loose bit of stone upon the ground, making as if he would cast it in my face, whereupon I jumped and dodged, as any sane man would, and forgot that I was blind, for I am not enough of a play-actor to let a villain Indian smite me in the face, if I know it.

At sight of my movement he gave a malicious laugh and called something to the Jeque that I could not understand, but the latter shouted aloud and men came running in every direction and seized and bound us. We had our staves and our daggers and might have fought our way through them, but the

girl would have remained behind, and it was not like us to abandon her who had been so faithful to us and, besides this, she bade us not resist them, so we suffered ourselves to be taken and led before the Cacique.

All this time the Jeque examined us as though we were strange toys, poking our flesh with his fingers and rubbing his hands over our faces, which was anything but pleasant,—stinking as they did of moque. After this they led, or rather dragged, us very promptly into the presence of the Cacique, whom we immediately recognised as the same who had been our friend and ally, yet we held our tongues and endeavoured to sustain our characters as well as we might and, accordingly, I went stumbling and groping my way, and imitated, as well as I could, the actions of a blind-man under such circumstances.

When we reached the Cacique's house, we found him seated on a throne or chair of state, surrounded by his head men and counsellors, and we were forced by those who led us to make obeisance to him. The Jeque then advanced and commenced to harangue those present with fire and eloquence, as could be seen from his gestures and the close attention which he received, his speech being concluded amid smiles and applause. They then called upon Olahla for a reply, and I could see that the girl strove to appear indifferent and tell her story as she had told it before, in a natural and unaffected manner. She was a clever actor, and I have no doubt that, if I could have understood all she said, I should myself have believed her story.

It was evident that her version was not without

effect upon all save the Jeque and his assistant, who stood by with smiles of mingled incredulity and scorn upon their faces.

Suddenly the former signed to his assistant, who instantly sprang forward and made as though he would smite me in the face, as before, but it is hard to beat an old dog twice with the same stick, and I neither winked nor moved, although I could feel the wind of his hand upon my face.

The two priests seemed disappointed, but not discouraged, and the Jeque turned to an attendant and took from him the little *mochila*, or bag, that Olahla had carried, turning it upside down so that all the pigments and other things fell out upon the ground. The malicious old man then held them up to view, one by one, explaining their use and pointing to me the while.

Suddenly he sprang forward and cut the bonds that secured mine arms, turning back the sleeve before I could prevent it and showing my great muscular limb, as white as milk.

The Cacique and his council drew a breath of astonishment and crowded quickly about us, poking and prodding our flesh, and exposing fresh parts of our bodies to view.

Olahla, they knew at a glance as one of their own people, but to have two live Children of the Sun in their power, to do with as they would, was the devil's own delight to them. The game was up at last, and I straightened back and drew myself up to my full height.

A murmur of gratification ran through the assemblage. "The Danta! The Danta!" they cried, and I saw that they knew me by the name that they had

given me, because of my size, when we stopped in the town on our way south.

At this all my pent-up vexation and anxiety broke forth and fell upon the head of the mischievous old Jeque, in the shape of a right sturdy buffet with the flat of my hand, that laid him stretched out upon the ground a dozen feet away, with dancing lights before his eyes, I ween. A cry of horror at the sacrilege broke from every lip and a dozen warriors flung themselves upon me. In a moment they had bound mine arms again and were lifting the stunned and bewildered Jeque to his feet.

Finding that he was not seriously injured, there ensued a heated argument amongst the members of the council in regard to what disposal should be made of us, and we could see by their threatening gestures that some of them were for cutting us down upon the spot, whilst others were for deferring our punishment.

Finding it useless to longer maintain our silence, I broke it by asking pardon of my comrades for the ill-considered and hasty act which had jeopardised the safety of us all.

"Say nothing, Gonzálo! I only envied thee the opportunity," responded Diego, generously; "my hands were a long time itching to feel his throat. I only regret that thou didst not give him thy closed fist for his payment and finish the matter at once."

Olahla did not seem as concerned as I had expected, but watched what was going on intently, trying to make sense of the odd words she could hear, that resembled words in her own language or dialect.

"No die now," she said, at last; "I think we go big house to die. Much better. Very nice! Much jeque: much moque: much peoples."

"Ah, I see what you mean, girl! They will keep us for their sacrifices."

"Not know what sacrifice be. Kill us all to make gods glad, so they send away all Spaniards."

"How long hence is it to be, girl?" I asked, hoping that we might have time and opportunity to escape.

"Olahla not know. Maybe eight days, maybe two weeks, three weeks. All same, he come some time;" and she shrugged her shoulders indifferently,—a trick she had caught from the Spaniards.

At last the conference seemed to be at an end and the matter finally settled, and soon afterwards they led us away and shut us in a strong room of heavy, hewn logs, set into the ground side by side and receiving all its light from a small window above our heads. A strong guard was stationed about the place, and, after they had called our attention to it, they removed our bonds and gave us an abundant portion of their best food.

Thus many days went by with no opportunity for escape, and always the same ample provision for our needs. At last, after some three weeks of monotonous captivity, there came a day when there was much stirring about amongst the people, and we were bound again and led forth from the house where we had been confined, into the presence of a great throng, which set up a loud shouting and crying at sight of us.

"Well, Diego, good friend and comrade,—it seems that we are to meet our end without a last

friendly embrace. 'Tis better to laugh than to weep, for our lights will go out together most likely. As for this poor girl, 'tis a sorry end we have brought her to," I said, turning my head, which was the only part of me that I could move, first toward Diego and then toward Olahla.

"No, no," she quickly replied, "not die now. Not ready yet."

"Ready or not," said Diego, thinking she meant that we were not ready, "they will not ask our license to take off our heads."

The girl laughed in what seemed a very inappropriate fashion and merely shook her head as before. Now that the time had come for our execution, strange as it may seem, we really wished that they would be quick about it and have the matter over with, for we needed not to wait until the priest should shrive us, in that there was none nigher than Bogotá, in so far as we knew.

We were attracting more attention than a mad dog in Madrid and the people seemed in no hurry at all to be quit of us, but came thronging around us with expressions of wonder and curiosity, prodding our flesh until our guards had to thrust them aside. My blond hair was by this time grown out at the roots so far that my head must have presented a most extraordinary appearance, and I do not altogether wonder that it excited the admiration and curiosity of the natives.

What they were waiting for we could not know, but, presently, heard the sound of their barbarous music coming toward us from the direction of the temple, and soon there came in sight a long procession headed by the chief Jeque and his assistants

and bearing burning moque and offerings of cloth and gold and emeralds.

"Can it be that they have decided that we are gods and are come to worship us?" I suggested, at sight of the display.

"Do they bind their gods?" queried Diego, in reply, with a quizzical smile.

"Perhaps they fear that we shall withdraw our beneficent presence, if they leave us unbound," I replied, in the same vein.

"An they elect to make these offerings to us and then unbind us, I, for one, shall bless them and take myself off to rejoin the General and buy back his favour with gems and gold-dust;" and he laughed bitterly as he thought of the increased debt he now owed Manrique and the slighter chance he had of paying it.

By this time the head of the procession had passed us and suddenly halted. Our attention was immediately drawn to three litters, each borne upon the shoulders of four stalwart Indians, and covered with a little tent or awning of matting. The bearers of these litters approached us and set them flat upon the ground: our guards then seized us and laid us each upon a litter, and arranged the shades over us for protection against the sun. Our bonds were partially loosed, so that they did not molest us, and yet they were left sufficiently tight to prevent all thought of escape.

It was impossible to see anything excepting the matting over our heads, as we lay stretched upon our backs, but soon we felt that the litters were raised from the ground and commenced to move off, accompanied by the barbaric clamour of their in-

struments, and then we knew that the whole procession was on its way.

Once before had I been carried in a similar manner to a most precarious destiny, and my thoughts could not refrain from oft reverting to my trip to Santa Marta in the power of mine enemy, Don Alonzo, and all the incidents connected with my succeeding fortunes. Where was Don Alonzo now? Had his father's emissaries obtained their demand for justice at last, with his head, or had he bought himself into favour and obtained Beatriz by force, as Manrique had once suggested, and as I had often feared that he would do? Well,—it mattered little to me now, yet the thought was most bitter in the mind and would not begone, but haunted me all through the journey.

Day after day we continued our steady march, halting only to take food and at night to camp upon the ground. By the varying inclination of my litter and the rough jolting, I knew that we were upon mountainous roads, and, one day, the increased cold and bitter wind told me that we were upon the *páramo*.

The fourth day, after a long-continued descent, the litters were set upon the ground, and the coverings removed from them. We found ourselves standing upon a shelf of level ground above the waters of a lake, whilst all about it were encamped great numbers of Indians. To our left, at the other extremity of the level ground, stood a great building or temple of wood with many great columns made from the trunks of huge trees, carved in many strange and fantastic forms. Upon the open space in front of the temple many jeques and their assist-

ants moved about, busied with their various offices.

As we stood looking about us with great curiosity, there approached an old and venerable man clad in the robes of a jeque, but showing by his dignity and the respect paid him by the others that he was signalised amongst them by some sort of pontifical rank. At sight of him Olahla started forward and made as though she would address him, but then restrained herself, and waited with us to see what would happen.

The old man, having looked us over with somewhat repressed interest, beckoned to some assistant, and, pointing toward the Temple, turned about and left us to our guards, who followed the man to whom he had beckoned and led us within the precincts of the vast building, where they unbound us and shut us in an impregnable room, to await our fate.

Glad to be free once more, and to be able to look into each other's faces, we settled ourselves to be as comfortable as possible, until the end should come. Olahla, as I had before remarked with surprise, seemed to be cheerful and full of spirits.

"Me know this place. This Guatavita. Olahla come here before. Very good place to die,—no?" This she said laughing and dancing about the room.

"Where will they bury us, girl? In the lake?" I enquired, seeking to bring her to a realising sense of our position.

"No, no! Why dirty water? Much better for vulture to eat;" and she went off into a peal of laughter, and shook until we thought she had lost her senses with the fear engendered by our critical situa-

tion. Then she added more seriously, "Besides, lake have got people already."

"Do they throw their victims in the lake, then?"

"No, no! Throw gold and stones; not throw dead people. Have got live people in the lake."

Diego and I looked at each other in amusement. Olahla flushed in anger.

"Very well! Very well! You laugh at Olahla. Then she go away;" and the proud girl turned her back on us and crouched in a far corner.

"Come, Olahla, don't be vexed," said Diego. "What is the story of the people in the lake?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders petulantly, but would not turn her head. I waited a moment, and then spoke affectionately and bade her tell us the tale. At once she turned and came forth with a smile on her face, and now it was Diego's turn to scowl and sulk, but neither of us paid any attention to him.

"You no sabe that story?" asked the maid. "Long, long time ago big chief this place, Cacique Guatavita, have pretty wife, but she not pretty good. She make love other mans. Then the Guatavita kill the other mans and tell all his peoples sing songs at her and laugh at her. This hurt her more as a knife. So she t'row herself and the Guatavita's little daughter and the girl that take care of her daughter, all into the lake."

"And they are there yet, are they, Olahla?" I gravely asked. The girl scanned me sharply to catch any lurking lack of seriousness and resumed.

"Oh, yes,—they there yet. The Guatavita, he love her very much. So he run up and down the

shore and tear his hair and say some very big words, and call all the jeques and say for them to bring his wife and his little girl out of the water. For the servant he do not care much.

"Then the Jeque burn some stuff, and say some prayers and things, and then he take off his clothes and jump in the water, for he not afraid of the big snake that live there. Then byme-by, presently, he come up and blow the water out of his nose and say he saw them all and talk with them down there in the water, and that the Cacica, she no will come, for she married now to the big snake, and live in a very fine house down there. Oh, then the Guatavita tear his hair some more, and say to the Jeque that he go back and get her, or he kill him. So the Jeque he burn some more stuff and say some more prayers, and then, plunk! he go down in the black water. This time he stay down very long time, so much as one cannot breathe, and then he come up with the body of the little girl, with her eyes picked out. He say that the big snake take out her eyes and send her back like that to show he very angry, but if they will send her back he will give her back her eyes and let her live again, but they must throw many green stones and much gold in the lake, and she will live always in the big house under the water. Then the Guatavita, he cannot console, but he tell the Jeque to t'row her in the water again to the big snake, and ever since that time they give much more gold and green stones to the snake than ever before."

"How long ago did all that happen?" asked Diego, seriously.

The girl shrugged her shoulders in her pet way,—

"How can Olahla tell? She not there. Maybe four twenties,—eight twenties,—maybe more."

"Is that all?"

"No, not all. The Cacica come out of the water many times. Say when it not rain for much time; say when Guatavita going to die; say when war come; say everything what happen. So they bring heap gold and t'row it in the water. One time the Cacique of Simijaca bring two twenties of Indians, all scarce can walk with gold, and t'row it all in."

Diego turned to me and his eyes flashed,—“Dost thou credit that tale, Gonzálo?”

"Why not?" I answered, meditatively. "What a fortune for the happy discoverer of the lake! It needs only to drain it and roll in golden mud, sparkling with green fire."

"Alas,—it is not for us!" and Diego heaved a sigh.

"Who knoweth?" I retorted, "for the sun hath not yet left the wall, and mayhap thou art drowning thyself in a hand-basin."

My companion shook his head lugubriously, and we both fell to ruminating, for we could not get quit of the thought of the treasure in the lake.

Towards dusk they brought us plenty of good food, of which we ate heartily enough. Outside we could hear the bustle of coming and going, and the occasional sound of discordant music. The odour of moque filled the place and nearly suffocated us at times, but in all other respects we were comfortably provided.

After we had eaten, I took the girl to task for her levity, and told her to tell us all the truth. She

looked contrite enough, but there was a gleam of mischief in her eyes.

"Very good, Don Gonzálo. Olahla sorry she laugh. Know these peoples very well. Think we no die, but Olahla want to play trick on old Jeque. Let be until byme-by, then Olahla tell you everything."

Early the following morning we were awakened by the renewed clamour of their musical instruments, and a band of priests came to conduct us to the place of sacrifice. This was a huge stone on the extremity of the level ground, facing the Temple, and full in the sight of all the people.

As we left the portal of the Temple, the priests took their places in two rows on each side of us and commenced a rude chant, which was answered by others at the end of every stanza, and by the people in a great chorus, when the priests paused and struck upon their cymbals. Some of them carried their instruments and some carried knives of copper and silver and polished wood, which last were as heavy and as hard as iron: others again carried salvers or censers containing burning moque, and other balsams and resins.

At the head of the procession walked the old man whom we had seen the evening before, and, as he stepped from under the doorway of the Temple, all the people fell flat on their faces on the earth, and remained there until the music suddenly ceased, and then they all stood upon their feet.

Had our position not caused us so great anxiety, the scene would have been impressive and full of interest, but we were so concerned for ourselves that we could find but little pleasure in watching the strange ceremonies.

We took notice, however, that *totumas* of chicha began to pass from hand to hand and all the people drank long and deep of it, beginning with the old man, whom we took to be the High-priest. From him the totuma came down the line to us and was held to our lips that we might drink also, which we disdained not to do, as we had had naught to break our fast that day. The deep potations of the people soon caused them to be filled with fire and lent new zeal to their shoutings.

Presently the music struck up again and a great hush fell upon the vast, half-inebriated assembly. All directed their eyes toward the Temple, and in a moment a strange and most extraordinary figure issued from the great door.

I had for some time noticed that Olahla was filled with great excitement and, finally, she turned to us, just as the figure came into view, and whispered: "Don Gonzálo,—look! El Dorado! El Dorado!"

Now, at last, I knew the meaning of the great gathering, and astonished beyond measure, fixed mine eyes upon the approaching object and saw that the girl was indeed right, and that there stood before us that wonderful being towards whom the eyes of the Western World had long turned in covetous desire.

With slow and stately step, the Dorado moved across the space which had been trodden but a moment before by ourselves. He was accompanied by a number of inferior chieftains, or caciques, all with gorgeous and fanciful head-dresses, and but little else on their bodies. As the Guatavita passed the High-priest, each saluted the other, and the former

then continued his march toward the lake, while the people broke into a wild, weird chant which rose and swelled and sank again, echoed and re-echoed in the hills about, and then burst forth in fearful and barbaric melody.

We could see, as he passed, that his entire naked body had been anointed with some sort of gum or resin, and over this had been sprinkled flakes of native gold until his whole body glittered in the morning sun with a solid mass of gleaming golden scales, save here and there where huge emeralds had been set upon his cheeks and forehead, breasts and navel. Upon his head was a heavy basket or helmet of burnished gold, and in his hand a sceptre of the same metal, somewhat in the form of a trident.

Slowly the Guatavita approached the margin of the lake, that lay calm and cold in the mists of the morning, which still rolled along its placid surface, but which had already begun to feel the genial influence of the morning sun and were lifting themselves higher and higher, as the Monarch of Day came above the hills.

The lake may have been some two leagues about, and was deep and dark in its cup-like cavity in the mountains. The natives were crowded for a great distance along its abruptly sloping sides, like spectators in a vast amphitheatre, so that all could easily see what was happening at our end.

As the Guatavita approached the border of the lake with his followers, the people fell back on either side to make a lane in the human mass through which he might proceed, and then we saw that a large raft with oars, or sweeps, lay moored to the shore. Upon

this were a number of seats slightly raised above the level of its surface, and some pots, or utensils, the use of which we did not know.

With dignified and solemn mien, the party took their places upon the frail *balsa* and shoved it gently into the lake, the rowers immediately beginning to propel it towards the centre, where they were soon lost to sight in the mists that chased each other lightly across its surface. The people still continued their song, but the totumas of chicha began to pass again from hand to hand, although no one now drank of it.

Little by little the mists passed away while the people waited, and, finally, they lifted altogether from the lake, showing the raft stationary in its centre. The air was clear as the air in these mountain regions always is, and we could plainly see those who were on the raft and make out their every movement.

At the moment when the disappearance of the mists revealed the raft to us, those who were upon it must have seen the Temple where we stood, for the Dorado arose to his feet and cast his helmet and sceptre into the water. One of the caciques then lifted one of the jars which stood upon the raft and held it in the attitude of pouring over the Guatavita's head, and immediately the latter plunged into the lake, whence he emerged a moment later and crawled back upon the raft, all the brilliance of the gold and gems being gone, and he standing naked in his tawny skin.

Straining our eyes to see what would happen after they had thus dissolved the gum that held the gold so that the water might wash it off, we saw them

take up the other vessels and cast them and their contents into the sacred depths.

At sight of this all the people shouted and drained the totumas of chicha which they held in their hands.

So absorbed were we in the contemplation of these ceremonies that we had well-nigh forgotten our own critical position, but, suddenly, a piercing shriek rang out, and we turned our heads quickly about, to find Olahla in the rude grasp of one of the jeques, who was armed with a cruel knife, which he was seeking to plunge into her bosom; but the girl had seen him in time, and writhed her body about to elude his grasp.

Where now was to be the safety of which the girl had assured us? A moment more and her life-blood would spatter our very clothes!

The girl struggled fiercely, crying out repeatedly some word in her own language, at sound of which the High-priest turned suddenly and looked at her curiously, but too late. The knife in the hands of the Jeque descended and would have buried itself in her breast had not her jacket, or shirt, suddenly given way in his grasp and been torn from her shoulder, leaving it bare of all covering.

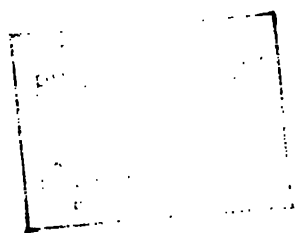
The Jeque, who was holding on by this bit of cloth, fell back, and his knife described a circle in the air and missed his victim.

There,—on her light-brown skin,—we all saw clearly outlined in blue, the form of the frog, where it had been skilfully tattooed when she was a child.

At sight of it the jeques who had run forward to assist their companion fell back in astonishment, and what seemed like fright. As for the High-priest, he



We turned our heads quickly about, to find
Olahla in the rude grasp of one of the jeques



had no sooner caught sight of the figure, or emblem, than he sprang forward and gazed closely at it like a person out of his mind, and then seized a knife from the hands of one of the jeques and loosed her bonds. Finding herself free, the girl pointed imperiously at us and commanded the priests to liberate us, which they did without a gesture of dissent.

Meanwhile, the people all wondered at the outcome of the matter, and, to satisfy them, the High-priest ordered two of them to be seized and slain, that their blood might take the place of ours, and propitiate the deity which they worshipped.

We were detained to see these victims meet the horrid fate which had so nearly been our own, and then we followed the High-priest into the Temple, bewildered by what had occurred, and knowing naught of the explanation of it. At the threshold we were separated from Olahla, who departed with the High-priest, and we were again thrust into the room where we had spent the preceding night, and left to ourselves.

We could still hear the people shouting and the sounds of music and dancing. The strange chant continued at intervals throughout the day, as the people recounted in verse the doings of their heroes and sages, but no one came nigh us save to bring us abundant food.

"Well, what next?" exclaimed Diego, as he sank upon a bench after we were left to ourselves. "These sudden changes which drag us from hope to despair and back again, do play havoc with the mind, even as the change in temperature from the Magdalena Valley to the Sabána and back again, upset the constitution of the body."

"I am not complaining that our tail is still in the trap, so long as it is not my life-fluid that is sinking fast into yon patch of ground without the door," I replied, stretching out my big muscles with the joyous life that was in me. "But who and what is our comrade become, that she commandeth jeques and warriors, and compelleth them to do her bidding? 'Tis safe to say that her power cometh from the church, for we find not warriors compelling priests, but always it is the other way about."

"Sawest thou the emblem upon her left shoulder?" enquired Diego; "it seemed to be a toad or some manner of loathsome reptile."

"Ay, it was a toad or else it was a frog. I saw it twice before: once when I saved the girl from that rascal, Malatesta, and once when she took the blow for me in Santa Marta. Certainly, at sight of it, our troubles vanished for the time. 'Tis without doubt that the girl hath some high family connection amongst the priestly class, but what it is I know not, for she hath never said aught of it to me, and hath ever served us faithfully in menial offices without a word of complaint or murmuring or a sign of aversion."

"That she hath, and held her life cheap in thy service, also," returned Diego, with a sigh. "What will they do with us now, thinkest thou?"

To this I could make no reply nor had I time, for the door opened and an attendant entered, bearing food.

CHAPTER XVII

IN DURANCE VILE

THE feasting and drinking went on all the day and the sound continually came to our ears. Part of the time it was like the hum of a distant hive, but, by spells, it was with a great shouting like the noise of battle. The night passed as the previous one had passed, save that the noise increased somewhat without, but, early the following morning, we were again loosely but firmly bound and placed upon the litters. All this time we had seen nothing of Olahla, and the litters were now but two in number instead of three.

As the sun rose, we could see many Indians walking backwards to the water's edge and casting handfuls of gold and emeralds over their shoulders into the lake, lest they offend the Cacica that dwelt in the lake by turning their faces toward her.

Ere we had had more than a glimpse of this, we were covered over with the rush mats, and saw no more of Guatavita and the Dorado. A small guard accompanied us, and we spent six days upon the road ere we came to Sugamuxi, where we rested a day, and were shut in a room in the great Temple there.

We then set out for Tunja, and were two days on the way, coming at last to the Temple, into which we were thrust and locked securely in a strong prison-chamber.

All this time we were without means of commu-

nicating with those about us, nor had we any hint of what our fate was to be. Even now, we knew not where we were, nor in what direction we had travelled, although, by watching the shadows, we had succeeded in making out that we had gone in a general northerly direction from Guatavita.

As for the route from Sugamuxi to Tunja, I thought that I could have retraced it, because there was a small opening in the matting close by my head, and, by twisting about, I had been able to place one eye at the hole from time to time, and gain a general idea of the road and the direction we had followed.

Our prison at Tunja was bare of all furnishing, save the mats on which we lay, so that we had not even the comfort of a three-legged stool or a *pooyo*, but must needs pace up and down our narrow cell, or fling ourselves upon the mats on the cold floor. Our nights were worse than disagreeable, for they were painful to an extreme. The abundance of good food was the one redeeming point in our captivity, yet were we not satisfied to remain forever, although I have heard men say that their fatherland was where their bellies were filled and there they would be most at home.

All these things, then, that detracted from our comfort, turned our minds towards thoughts of liberty, and we began to plan, somewhat vaguely, to break away from our captors at the first opportunity.

"Let us take to the River, man," said Diego, "and gain Santa Marta. Once there, thy favour with the Governor will stand thee in good stead."

"'Tis well thought, Diego. Once let us drop down the slope of this plateau and 'twill be a seven

days' wonder if we strike not some stream down which we may drift in the night on a balsa, and, by remaining in hiding during the day, we may reach the Great River, down which we may easily make our way until we reach our friends."

Once the new idea was in our heads, we turned it over often until it was well browned on both sides. A great pang, it is true, went through our hearts at the thought of leaving Olahla without having any knowledge of her whereabouts, or she of ours, for aught we knew. Indeed, after the first interest in our new plan was passed, Diego would have waited until she let us hear from her, but I would not consent to it, for I knew that she must be among friends, and mine interest in her was distinct from his.

I thought often of Alonzo and Beatriz, and wished now to take what little gold I had in Málaga and spirit the girl away from her people to some quiet corner where we might be at peace with the world. I was weary of adventure and ill-fortune, and so, for the matter of that, was Diego, and at last he gave way to my reasoning and we watched every opportunity to make our escape.

Finally, I fell upon a plan that gave promise of success, and Diego agreed to make the trial at the most favourable opportunity.

We both had our knives, which had never been taken from us, as the Indians did not seem to recognise their use, enclosed as they were in ornamented sheaths, whereas their own knives are of a very different shape and appearance, and they know not the use nor the aspect of steel. Even my shirt of mail lay next to my skin, under my cotton jacket, and had not left my body during my captivity. The

jeques would have found it a hard task, indeed, to thrust their copper knives through its finely-wrought and tempered links, had they sought to commence the sacrifice with me instead of Olahla, that day at Guatavita.

That night, as usual, the warder brought us our food and drink and set it steaming upon the floor: he then rose to go, as was his custom, when I suddenly placed my hand over his mouth, whilst Diego caught his wrists and held them. In a moment I had bound him and thrust an ear of maize, that I had denuded of kernels, between his teeth, and we robbed him of all his clothing, transferring it to Diego, who then caught up the pots that had remained from the morning's meal and, imitating as well as he could the mien and carriage of the Indian, passed forth into the gloom of the Temple and followed the guard who had remained in waiting for the warder. I heard them speak to him and trembled for the outcome, but the quick-witted fellow dropped an olla upon the ground so that it broke in pieces, and muttered and grumbled as he got down upon the floor to pick them up.

The guard must have left him then, and gone on a bit, for I could hear their retreating footsteps as I was finishing tying up the naked Indian with strips torn from Diego's clothing. I could hear Diego still muttering and groping until he thought they were far enough away, and then he came back and took down the great bar which they had placed across the door and came into the room with an air of triumph.

"Be quick, now," he cried, "let us eat what we cannot carry and be off!"

We gathered up at once what food would bear transportation and wrapped it in bits of cloth from our garments, and the rest, which we could not carry in our pockets, we bestowed where it would do the most good to the greatest number of people, although, for all we could know, it might be like the breakfast they give to him who is to be hanged. We then pulled our knives from their sheaths and stole cautiously out of the door, finding ourselves in a long corridor, and at the end of this corridor we could see the guard standing in the light that still came from the dying sun through the outer doorway. To right and to left we could see no turning.

"For hard bread a sharp tooth," murmured my companion; "we must rush the guard, Gonzálo! Let us have at them and stick together when we pass them."

"Nay, nay, friend," I whispered, in reply, "they stand now in the light, and it is still bright outside. Let us wait until they miss the warder and return to seek him. Thus we gain the advantage of the darkness and they may pass us here if we flatten ourselves against the wall."

"Good!" agreed Diego, and we cautiously advanced as far as we dared, hugging one side of the corridor. The twilight, which is so short in these latitudes, now rapidly gave way to the deeper gloom of night. Soon we saw the guards stirring about, and presently two of their number came toward us, leaving the other six at the door. Here was an emergency we had foolishly overlooked. The two would quickly discover the open door of the prison and the warder bound within, and would return for aid, searching the corridor as they passed.

"Let them pass and then rush the guard at the door," I whispered, and my comrade squeezed my hand in reply, as we flattened ourselves all we could against the wall, to let the soldiers pass. At that moment we felt the wall give way behind us, and, in an instant more, with a resounding crash, we fell backwards, one upon the other, in a sprawling heap upon a door that had given way beneath our weight.

'Twas a great wonder that we did not cut ourselves or each other with the knives which we held in our hands, but such was not our ill-fortune, and, in the twinkling of an eye, we were upon our feet and fleeing in the darkness through the passage which the accident had opened to us.

We could not doubt but that our foes would be upon us if we hesitated, so we rushed into the darkness, not knowing whither we went. In a moment we brought up against a solid wall of logs, rather more to our discomfiture than to theirs, for they gave not before us, but shut off all apparent exit.

The darkness in this extreme end of the passage was intense, but we could fancy a ray of light from the right, and commenced to feel our way along the wall in that direction. Soon we brought up against the side-wall and retraced our steps, only to find a similar wall on our left.

"Trapped,—by the Virgin!" I cried, as I realised into what sort of a cul-de-sac we had run. "Look back, Diego!"

We both stood still for a moment and saw the guard, with wonderment on their faces, standing over the fallen door with torches in their hands. Evidently they had not before known of its existence and, as yet, they knew nothing of our escape. They

would soon discover this, however, and then would no longer suspect their comrade of having accidentally penetrated some mystery of the temple.

Without another word we set about exploring our hiding-place again. Where there was a door and corridor there ought to be an exit. Corridors lead somewhere in all well-regulated houses. All along the left-hand wall we felt with our hands, until we feared to come within the space illuminated by the torches. Then we crossed over and went back along the other wall, Diego ahead, until we reached the end, where we had already run against the wall a few moments before.

"Done!" he exclaimed, as he reached it; "there is no way out. Let us rush the guard!"

"Folly, man! Insensate folly," I replied, catching his sleeve and pointing in the darkness, as though he could see my gesture. "Dost thou not see that there are twenty warriors there, at least, and a couple of jeques bustling about? Let us rather remain here quietly and await their coming, for in a moment they will be upon us. They can but shut us up again or murder us."

Saying this, I leaned against the wall, and caught myself again ere my muscles had relaxed. "Ha!" I cried, "the wall gives way, and there is hope again. Let us see what we have here!"

I set my powerful shoulders against the logs and put forth all my strength, with my body kept well under control the while, that I might not go with whatever should yield. The logs slowly moved apart and left an aperture in the wall. Through this we quietly passed, testing the ground beneath our feet for pitfalls as we advanced, and feeling our

way with our daggers step by step. When we had in this way advanced some half-dozen varas toward the light that we had at first dimly seen, and which was now more plainly visible, I bethought me to close the door behind us, and went back and pushed the logs into place again, immediately rejoining my companion, after which we went on again as fast as we could toward the light.

At length we began to be incommoded by the smell of burning moque and, finally, issued forth from the darkness into a recess in the wall behind a sort of altar, on which were set some earthen dishes containing the stinking stuff, which gave off the feeble light that we had seen.

Piled upon the altar were great heaps of mantles of cotton cloth, together with little figures made of gold, and a great quantity of emeralds. Approaching the exit, we saw that it was for the most part hung over and concealed by mantas, between the folds of which the light penetrated; so we judged that this might be some priestly device to enable the god to accept the offerings which were placed before him; the existence of some such deceits having been known among the ancients and even rumoured in our land of Spain and amongst our own priests; but, be this as it may, we now became aware that we were in the main body of the Temple and looked about to see if there were any worshippers present.

The ceiling was not lofty and was supported by beams laid flat across the huge wooden pillars which formed its walls, but the area of the place was so considerable that it was some time before we could make out its interior. Upon a daïs at our right there was a great carven chair or throne, hung all

about with mantas and feather-work and ornamented with plates of gold.

Set about the building in niches in the walls were four and twenty great idols made of carven wood, whilst vast numbers of lesser ones of wood, earthenware, and gold were scattered everywhere. All these idols were decked with mantas and ornamented with gold and emeralds, and the walls of the temple were so thickly hung and festooned with fine cotton cloths, all dyed and woven in curious mystic figures, that the logs which formed them were nowhere visible.

Although we were lost in wonderment at all these things, we none the less made out that, save for ourselves, the place was empty of human beings, so we issued from our hiding-place and made for the side opposite the great throne, for we judged that there might be an exit there. Ere we did this, however, that instinct which is ever uppermost in a Christian and a Spaniard led us to fill our hands with emeralds, which we tied in a corner of our garments.

Scarcely had we done this, and given a few steps across the floor towards the place where we thought the exit was, than we heard the sound of voices and noise of feet and weapons, and the flickering light of some torches burst through the space between the mantles, where we had just stood. A moment later, they were thrust aside and a band of jeques, accompanied by a number of armed warriors, sallied forth from behind the altar and from beneath the great wooden god that stood in the niche above, and which we had not until now noticed.

We were yet too far away within the shadow to be seen, so Diego drew me by the sleeve behind an-

other altar, and thence into a blind recess beneath the god which stood back of it. This was not what we had desired or expected, for we had hoped to find a passage similar to that by means of which we had entered. Assuring ourselves that there was no possible exit, we tried to make our way to another altar, but this was now impossible, owing to the fact that the jeques and their attendants were scattered all about the building, and only the nooks and the corners remained in shadow.

Our only hope was the altar itself, so we turned toward it in desperation and felt it with our hands. As nearly as we could tell, it was naught but a massive block of wood some three varas in length by two in width, hewn square by some rude tool, and ornamented with writings and carvings, after the Indian fashion. The top, which stood on a level with our chins, was piled high with loose masses of cotton cloth, and beneath these we must hide, as our last chance.

Quick as thought, I gave Diego a hand up and he crawled gently over the edge, falling into a great tray, or recess, cut in the top of the altar to receive the offerings. With the aid of his helping hand, I was soon beside him, and we stretched ourselves out in the tray, or trough, and gently pulled the mantles over us. All this was done with the greatest care, as the other side of the pile of mantles was in the light, and could be clearly seen by all.

For hours the search continued and, when it was concluded, the jeques remained stationed in the Temple and guards were set at the doors.

Morning came and the situation had not changed. We munched some of the dried venison that we had

in our pockets, but dared not exchange a word, nor even sleep, lest our heavy breathing should attract the attention of our enemies and bring them upon us. Once, indeed, I dozed and Diego dug me in the ribs with his thumb until I all but exclaimed aloud, but caught myself in time.

Throughout the day we heard much coming and going, with never a moment of absolute quiet, and we dared not move. At last, as we judged that the day was nigh spent and our aching joints demanded ease in voice imperative, Diego suddenly commenced to roll uneasily from side to side, but uttered no sound. Thinking him mad to thus risk our lives, I nudged him savagely to bring him to his senses, when of a sudden my legs began to be afire and I too writhed beneath a torture which was as real as it was inexplicable. For a moment I thought that I must yell or die, when suddenly a hand was laid upon us, the mantas which covered us were torn aside, and we looked up into the fierce and malignant eyes of a jeque who was regarding us.

Without taking time for thought, I struck the fellow in the face with my closed fist, laying him outstretched upon the ground, whilst Diego and I bounded from our place of concealment and raced across the open floor of the Temple with hundreds of great savage ants clinging with their strong and fiery jaws to our clothes and flesh, and dozens of clamouring priests and servants close at our heels.

The scouts of the insects, attracted by the food in our clothing, had sought us out and brought an army of hungry little soldiers to drive us from our hiding-place. No human being could stand their angry onslaught, when once they were aroused.

Dagger in hand, we flew through the midst of the astonished guard at the door ere they could resist our passage and found ourselves in the dusky streets. Here we knew not which way to turn, but trusted to the fortune that had hitherto brought us on our way, and plunged into the darkness, beating down with fist or dagger those who sprang to oppose our passage.

On we sped over even and uneven ground, stumbling and falling over sticks and stones and Indian babies until we had lost the sound of pursuit, and stayed our steps only to regain our breath. For he who runs, runs; but he who is pursued, runs faster. 'Twas then, when we halted, that we felt the stinging pain of the ants again.

"Curse the little pests!" cried Diego, stooping to brush them off as well as he could in the darkness, and succeeding with some, although others left their heads embedded in the flesh with unrelenting grip, whilst their bodies broke off at the neck.

"Say, rather, bless them for our liberty! Knowest thou not that we are free? Free, man!"

"True! True! I had not thought of that, but let us on, lest we lose our dearly purchased liberty ere we profit by it."

So we pushed on—ever on into the night, keeping to the beaten paths, and trusting to the darkness to conceal our identity, but not knowing whither we journeyed and caring little; exulting in our new-found liberty, and thinking not for the moment of the problem we must solve with the approach of light. At last I stopped again and drew my breath.

"Is it to the south or is it to the north, comrade? Go we back to Quesada and the expedition, or strike

we for the Great River and Don Pedro?" and I sought out in the star-lit sky the Cross of the South, and scanned the gloomy horizon for the outline of the Cordillera.

"What say you if we leave it to fortune to decide?" he replied. "It is too much for me, for in any case we are like to have crawled out of the mud to fall in the mire. Let us take the road that is leading us from the páramo towards the occident and, if its first turn is toward the north, why, then, let our way lie toward Santa Marta; while, if it swing about toward the south, we will e'en try our luck with our comrades of the expedition again, and God grant we be not fetching barley to a dead ass."

"Done!" I cried, and we resumed our march and soon swung about toward the south and Bogotá, which, indeed, was the likelier chance, for, as all roads lead to Rome in the ancient world, so, in this Indian Empire, few there be that lead not to Bogotá. Yet had we not taken this into consideration at the moment, and were honest enough in our little game with the fickle hussy, Fortune. Heaving half a sigh apiece to make one good one between us, we turned our faces resolutely toward the Capital, and went on with long strides through the chill night, glad to feel the blood come hotly in our veins with the unwonted exercise.

As I walked I thought, and the burden of my thoughts was a small matter not worth mentioning, so I shall pass it over in silence, for it was nothing more than that my half of the sigh had seemed to me a trifle more sincere and hearty withal than that which had been fetched by Diego. Perhaps it was but the imagination, but so, in truth, it

seemed to me at the moment. What mattered it, anyway,—the deeper the water, the sooner should we drown.

On our journey through the night, and our lying in the brush through the day, and our further journey and hiding for several days, whilst we lived upon what had been brought us to our prison to serve as one meal, until we would almost fain have filled our bellies with the great stones which we had brought with us, I shall not dwell.

By the third night we could endure it no longer, and, upon coming forth from our concealment of the day, were resolved in some way to lay our hands upon food at the nearest village, and fight and run for it, if need be. As the plain was thickly settled, we soon came to a village, or small town, and, with great care, set about the accomplishing of our purpose.

We could see that there was still some movement about the place, although the hour was late, but, having crept up into the shadow of some huts, we sought to find some house without a tenant, for the moment, which might have some food which would minister to our necessities.

As fortune determined it, our first inspection showed us that the hut to which we had come was empty of animate and stored with inanimate things; in short, that we had fallen upon some sort of *bodega*, or storehouse. Yet fortune did not altogether favour us, for a light burned upon a bracket on the wall. Nothing risked, nothing won, and trouts are not to be caught with dry breeches, so we cut the withes which bound the uprights of the house, and drew a couple of the posts from their places.

All seemed safe, and with avid eyes we marked our supper where it lay upon the ground.

At this moment the door opened from the street and Manrique stepped into the room! We had fled from the fire and were fallen into the embers!

"Most Holy Virgin!" he cried, in astonishment, drawing back in terror, and then, as he saw that we had but daggers, he drew his sword and, calling for assistance, sprang toward the hole which we had made through the wall, in order to cut off our retreat. We were fallen between twelve o'clock and noon, for in a moment the room filled with soldiers, and we knew that we were among friends at last, who were to us as enemies. Sheathing our daggers, we bowed to the Captain, and requested him to permit us to help ourselves to food and then present ourselves to the General, whom we were seeking, but had not hoped to find so soon.

Manrique laughed a sceptical laugh, and bade us take what we desired, and, as to seeing the General, we should come to him without fail and within the hour, when we should have a chance to explain our absence and the cause of it.

With this but thinly veiled menace hanging over us, we ate the welcome food with an appetite to constant peril accustomed, and, ere we had finished eating, were visited by the General himself, who came to the hut upon receiving advice of our presence, and stood gazing at us with grave and severe demeanour. With him came Suárez, Sanmartín, and other Captains, who greeted us as kindly as they dared; and, as for us, we made obeisance and preferred our request for a few private words of explanation with his Excellency.

Sadly and severely he shook his head, saying to me, "When last I saw thee I stood in peril of my life at thy hand, and shall I place a premium now upon the work of the assassin?"

"Not so, your Excellency!" I cried; "they who wish me evil have convinced you against your better judgment;" and I glanced at Manrique, whose lip curled in contempt.

The General frowned, and I saw that I had not mended my case by indicating that his judgment had been warped by others; nevertheless, I continued boldly: "It was but an inadvertent gesture. Count over my deeds, and look upon my record! Is it likely that I should do a dastard deed like that?"

The General looked thoughtful, and I could see that I had impressed him;—then his brow clouded again, and he turned away, saying, "Yet thou didst fall upon my trusted Captain, two against one, and that from out the dark and unawares."

"Let him who affirms it stand forth, that I may give him back the lie in his teeth! He did, himself, insult a harmless Indian maid whose courage had but just then saved the garrison, and he would have slain her wounded protector as he lay swooning from the wounds received in the defence of the palace. Let him deny that my blade alone turned him from his villain intent!"

Manrique's eyes flashed with rage and hate, but he controlled himself in a most masterly fashion, and, shrugging his shoulders indifferently, he drawled in mocking tones: "The two have had time to put head to head and devise even more fantastic romances than this that we have heard,

without doubt, since the time when their guilty consciences drove them, all uncondemned, to sudden flight."

Here he put his ingenious finger on the one weak point of our case, and the General glanced from one to another as if to read our souls, but was not able, for he still believed the innocent to be guilty. I saw that I had shot under the mark, and so I held my peace.

Presently Diego's courtly tones fell on mine ear. "Your Excellency," he said, in an even, gentle voice, "the case indeed looketh dark for mine old comrade and myself, when our word is contradicted by this *gentleman*;" and, at the last word, something of the cutting scorn and irony in his voice reached the fragmentary soul of Manrique so that he writhed in mingled shame and anger as his old-time rival went on in the same soft tones: "Grant us one boon in memory of what little service Fortune and the Virgin have permitted us to render. Put us upon probation, under espionage if need be, to which we shall cheerfully submit and give our knightly word in gage of our sincerity. We engage to lead your army to such a treasure as shall satisfy the appetites of all, and, as a token, take these stones which we snatched in our hasty flight from captivity;" and he turned out of his pockets all the fine emeralds which he had, and I made haste to do the same.

The Captains crowded round, and even the General forgot for the moment his doubts and Manrique his intrigue, and both pressed toward us with the others to examine the sparkling gems.

The chimney-sweep is black, but his money is white. In Old Spain money was the yard-stick, and

now it seemed likely that justice in the New World was to be told off by the same measure.

As it happened, we had at length hit upon a happy moment, for the General had left Bogotá upon rumours of the existence of this same Temple of Tunja, where we had been confined, with an Indian guide, who, to lead him astray, had wandered about from place to place until all were fairly desperate with fatigue and discouragement.

When their interest in the stones was somewhat abated, the General gave us over to Suárez, upon his engaging to respond for us, and we were forthwith provided with our own weapons and armour, which we found with our friends, who fell upon our necks and wept for joy.

We were given to understand that we were in no-wise pardoned nor admitted to the confidence of our General, for he argued with himself, I take it, that one hears the river only when there is water in it, but Captain Suárez was to be responsible for us with his own head, lest, as I suppose, it might fall out that our hen had cackled and left no egg. Glad to be whole of our necks for the moment, we must be content to fold our capes according as the wind blew. It was better far, indeed, to lose the ring than the finger!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SACK OF THE TEMPLE

THE name of the village to which we had come was Cienaga, a small place where the General had reposed for some time while he sent out expeditions in various directions in order to discover new things, but, as soon as he had heard from us something of the riches and splendour of the Tunja, who, although he was a fat old man, yet was so wise and wideawake, and withal so fierce in his disposition, that the Spaniards had journeyed for weeks in his dominions, always supposing themselves to be still in the territory of the Zipa; for the Tunja had given command to his vassals not to let our people know of his existence and none of his subjects had dared to disobey him, so terrible were the old man's threats.

Now, however, on receiving our assurance that we could guide him directly to the City of Tunja, from whence we were come, our General resolved to set forth immediately, not confiding the expedition to any hands but his own, and taking with him fifty picked men, half foot and half horse.

As I look back upon it, it doth seem well-nigh incredible that one should dare to go against a King in his Capital with such a fistful of men and no fire-arms. Yet they were men indeed, and were the boilings-down of the pot which had been full of good stuff when we left Santa Marta, and was now well-nigh empty.

Having been dismissed to our quarters, we gathered about the cheery blaze to which we had so long been unaccustomed, and begged from our old comrades a recital of their fortunes since we had left them, and, not to make a long story out of this, I shall simply say that our General had tried in every way to make peace with the Zipa and, failing at last, had sent an expedition to find him, but was unsuccessful in this quest, because of the treachery of the guides.

Our soldiers then set themselves to learn something of the language of the Indians and, succeeding very well with this, were soon able to establish friendly relations with them, so that presently they came to visit the camp and engage in trials of strength and agility.

The desire of the General to lay hands on the wealth of the Tunja would admit of no delay, and, as the crafty old King was known to have spies about who would certainly inform him of our arrival, he wished to lose no time, lest the treasure be removed. Hence, at break of day, we set forth by forced marches to come upon him unawares. Diego and I covered our heads with mantles to disguise our persons and, as we were in armour, it was not likely that we would be recognised by the way.

As we came toward the City, thousands of Indians, filled with curiosity to see us, surrounded us on every side, while from the houses swarmed others like ants, bearing their children and their valuables on their backs, to place them in hiding, because of their fear of us.

That was a sight to make men marvel,—to see our little company urging its way through such a throng,

with the Licentiate so calm and resolute, riding at our head.

Though all the multitude about us was well-armed and made such a clamour with voices and instruments of martial music that this alone was enough to leave a coward frozen stiff where he stood, yet none dared to attack us, so great was the terror inspired by us in all of them. Indeed, I doubt not that there was in this the hand of God or of the Blessed Virgin, wearied at last of the sinful unbelief and idolatry of these heathen and inclined to give them over to the one true Church for discipline and teaching.

Be that as it may, with this and with that, we entered the streets of the City, and passing through them, arrived at last at the doors of the Palace.

Upon the doors, which were made of bamboo slats and faced the setting sun, hung plates of polished gold which glittered in the light and, swinging to and fro, jingled as the doors opened and shut, and, so wonderful is the lack of covetousness amongst these people that, although the plates hung there day and night, no one ever thought to steal them, which seemed passing strange to us.

When the Tunja saw that we had indeed come, he commanded to close the doors, which were locked only with bits of rope knotted about the posts, and, while we were demanding entrance, his followers passed a large part of his wealth, which had already been arranged in packages, over the walls of the adjacent patio, whence it was immediately carried away and hidden, and has never since been found.

All this was at the time unknown to us, but, impatient at the delay in opening the gate, Alférez Olalla sprang from his horse and cut all the ropes through

with one stroke of his sword, whereupon the General and the rest of us dismounted and pushed forward into the building, sword in hand, to find ourselves in an inner court, about which were several buildings, and to the principal one of these we made our way, knowing that we should find the King there. Pushing our way through the tumult of his terrified vassals, we entered the house and found ourselves at last in his presence.

The King was seated on a carved wooden throne, with a foot-stool of *espartillo* under his feet. To right and to left of him were numbers of his principal nobles and chiefs, standing and paying court to him, a thing which the old man well knew how to demand of his own subjects, and also of us, for, when he saw us entering with drawn swords and hostile mien, he moved not in his seat, but his attendants made signs to us to approach him with proper respect.

Whether the old man thought that we should not dare to lay hands upon his sacred person, I know not, but no sign of emotion appeared upon his severe and majestic countenance, only, when he fixed his eyes upon my blond hair, now flying free upon my neck, he seemed to recognise me, although I remembered not having seen him before.

The General, being assured that it was indeed the King, by the respect that was paid him, called for an interpreter to tell him that our mission was pacific; that we were come from a rich and powerful monarch who dwelt in lands far distant, to salute him and ask his friendship; and that we bore messages of great importance to him for the health and welfare of his realm and the safety of his soul; but that this could not be brought about save with a treaty

of peace and friendship; to which end he engaged that his followers should do no harm to him and trusted that he would respond with equal manifestations of friendliness.

This speech seemed to please the Tunja, who was hoping to gain time for flight, and, accordingly, he replied to the General that this seemed good to him, and therefore he would beg us to go and repose in the place which he had prepared for us and, on the morrow, he would arrange the treaty as desired.

When the General saw that the fair words were in reality spoken only to gain time for the Tunja to escape, he decided at once to imitate Hernando Cortéz and seize the person of the Tunja as hostage in the same manner that Cortéz seized the Emperor Montezuma.

In pursuit of this intention, and with the most marvellous courage and audacity, he passed the word to Alférez Olalla and both stepped forward to carry out the purpose and seize the Tunja in the midst of ten thousand of his vassals, who crowded the grounds of the palace.

When the Tunja saw that the Spaniards dared even to lay hands upon his sacred person, he lost that look of dignity and indifference which he had hitherto maintained, and cried aloud to his Captains not to let such a handful of men so greatly dishonour him in his own palace.

Upon this all the Indians within and without shouted aloud their war-cries, and some ran this way and some that, trying to get at us, so that presently there was such a great confusion and tumult that we could scarce find room to lay about us with our good toledos.

Meanwhile, our companions outside, hearing the noise, tried to come to our aid, both horse and foot, but were restrained by Captain Suárez, who commanded them to hold the gates and ride about the palisades, to prevent the entry of more Indians. This they did, but so great was the number of the enemy that, had it not been that God fought for us, we, his little band of Christians, whom he desired should be the seed and beginning of the Holy Catholic Faith in these vast provinces given over to idolatry and wickedness, must certainly all have perished, for, had the Indians laid down their arms and each one taken a handful of earth and cast it upon us, there must have been enough to bury us all alive at the one throwing.

The noise and confusion lasted until the night was well upon us, and the Indians could make no headway against us. At last they began to disperse and go to their houses, on learning that their King was our prisoner, so the General finally succeeded in turning them out of the palisade, and placed sentinels all about, and the Tunja he permitted to remain in his own house with his servants and family.

Not one of us could sleep, in spite of the cessation of the strife, for, while some did their duty as sentinels or remained on guard with the King, the rest of us ransacked the place for treasure, finding one of the packages which they had made ready to take away and which contained eight thousand pesos of gold jewelry, and also we found a coffin with bones of some cacique and six thousand pesos of fine gold and an equal value in emeralds; while on the doors and walls were numbers of images and ornaments of gold and many conch shells, which had

come in the way of trade from the coast, and were much esteemed as trumpets, all ornamented with gold. There were also many strings of fine beads made of gold and stones of various sorts, which the caciques use as ornaments on feast days.

Searching further, we came upon great quantities of munitions of war which the Tunja had been gathering against the Zipa, with whom he was frequently at war, and, amongst these, many plates of gold for shields to be worn upon the heads and breasts of the warriors.

When the General saw that we were gathering a very great quantity of gold, he gave orders that all should be placed in a general deposit, without the hiding of one little bit for ourselves, under pain of death. It was gathered in a heap in the centre of the principal patio, and, as we came and went and gazed at the ever-growing pile, we shouted with frenzied enthusiasm, "Peru,—General,—Peru!"

But the Indians who saw us through the palisade, thus plundering their chieftain, took the hint and hid their treasure, so that on the morrow we found the City stripped, as was also the great Temple where Diego and I had been confined. Nevertheless, in the graves of the nobility we took many thousands of pesos of fine gold, so that the sum-total was very considerable, although perhaps not the tithe, nay, even the hundredth part, of all that had been carried away and hidden by the unreasonable subjects of the Tunja; for why should they seek to deprive us of what has so little value to them and is so greatly coveted by us?

As the thirst for gold is never quenched, but grows as it is satisfied, our General sought to per-

suade the Tunja to ransom himself, but this he would not do, nor in any way treat with him, but turned his back upon his messengers, and would not reply to them at all.

At last, despairing of obtaining aught else from the Tunja, either by threat or persuasion, and yet willing to keep his promise to him of personal safety (which same fidelity to his word was one of the great virtues of the Licentiate Quesada), he loosed him, and prepared to set out at once for Sogamoso upon mine assurance that I could guide him to its vicinity, because I had spied out the route through the hole when I was borne in the litter by the Indians. Diego, also, had painted the riches of the place in glowing colours, in hope of thus getting word of Olahla, yet I feared that the mystery which enveloped her disappearance was not likely to be ever lifted.

Taking with him twenty mounted cavaliers and thirty peons, the General set out promptly in the direction of the Sacred City of Sugamuxi, where dwelt the Great High-priest of all this region; leaving the rest of his army in Tunja to guard the treasure which we had gathered.

At the end of the second day we came to the last hill before we could see the City, but, although it was by this time well along in the afternoon, the General decided to push on over the hill toward Sogamoso and, as we came upon the crest of the ridge, we saw a great army drawn up to oppose us.

It being now almost dusk, the General rode down upon them in great haste and, with the shock of the cavalry and the terror of the horses, we drove them before us and pushed on to the habitations of the

chief, where we found much gold, although some had been removed, and thence we went to the great Temple, which they had had no time to strip. Here we encamped and set sentinels about the place, because it was too dark to see.

Ever since we had turned our horses' heads toward the City, Diego was transformed into another person. Nervous disquiet seemed now to give him no rest, so I watched him closely, ill-at-ease myself, for I knew of what he was thinking, and how little hope there was that his mind would be relieved of anxiety. As the moments flew by, he did naught but pace back and forth and up and down, with the air of one cogitating upon some puzzling question, to which he had found no answer. I spoke at length:

"What sayest thou, comrade? Shall we ask leave of the General to roam about a bit and gather what news we can of the missing girl?"

At this he brightened visibly, but shook his head, and said: "I fear me it will be of no avail. It is not likely that she hath come to grief, but I divine that she is of too much importance to the High-priest to be given liberty to go about freely, so that she cannot come to us when she learns of our arrival. As for the old rogue himself, no doubt he hath long ere this gone off with his sacred skin to other quarters, and in it his sacred bones and the rest of his sacred person, green frog or blue toad and all, for I saw the same sign on his parchment skin that day at Guatavita."

"Thy fears but confirm mine," I replied, "but that is no good reason why we should despair of finding her. Let us to the General, at least, and prefer the request."

Diego hesitated, but at last gave way and consented, and together we repaired to the quarters of the General, to whose presence we were admitted with but little ceremony.

We found him in a right good humour, which augured well for our mission, but, when we told him of our desire, he shook his head and said we were too few to spare two swords at such a time. I reminded him that, had it not been for the girl, we would not have been able to lead him to the place where he then was, and that it was but just to endeavour to find her; to which he replied that, had it not been for the girl, we had not left him in the first place, and hence, as she had brought us into all the trouble, it was but just to leave her where she was, unless we could get news of her some other way.

"No, no, gentlemen,—I am truly beholden to ye for this day's work, and for the success of the other expedition, but I cannot let ye go, at least until our reinforcements come up, so there is no more to be said."

I had expected as much, and only thought of diverting Diego when I came upon the quest, so I bowed low and turned to go, but the General stopped me and asked me to stay and serve him as secretary for a few hours. Diego went out and I passed into an ante-chamber of the house where the General was lodged, and there I made shift to set down in writing such accounts of the taking of Tunja and Sogamoso as I could, for our commander was most particular to chronicle all his acts and keep a careful record of our progress.

In this work I was employed nigh upon an hour, or thereabouts, when there came a great noise with

the sound of many voices and the clamour of arms. At the same time the feeble and flickering light of the torch by which I wrote became no longer of any use, as a great light burst through the open window and I knew in a moment that there must be a conflagration of some sort, so I sprang to my feet and leaped through the window of the room. I gazed for a moment, appalled at the sight which met mine eyes, for forked tongues of flame were darting through the great thatched roof of the Temple itself and leaping upward into the dark night, to burst at length into showers of sparks, which floated in the still air and fell again on every side.

My first thought was of the treasure, and I dashed through the great door which stood open and free to every comer. In an instant I found myself amid a throng of our men rushing to and fro, dodging the falling brands, and snatching up what articles of value they could lay their hands upon. The fire made rapid progress, and it soon became evident that we could do but little in the way of salvage.

The heat had become well-nigh intolerable, when, of a sudden, I felt some one grasp me by the arm and shout in mine ear: "Look there, Gonzálo! Look there, man!"

I turned and saw Diego with his smoke-blackened visage streaked with little rivers of sweat and his eyes fixed upon the dark interior of the Temple. Following his glance and his pointing arm with mine eye, I made out in the gloom beyond the blazing, impassable furnace that lay betwixt us and them, the High-priest clutching by the arm a maiden draped in white, and, as the flames flickered and fell and burst again into furious life, her slender figure stood for

a moment against the dark background as the old priest clung to her arm and drew her away, not indeed until she had sadly waved her hand in recognition, then, with a great burst of flame, an enormous mass of the blazing roof fell upon the spot where they stood, and we fled together, just in time to save ourselves.

"Come around to the other side of the Temple!" cried Diego, seizing mine arm again, and sadly I followed the poor fellow as he frantically made his way about the vast edifice, only to be disappointed in his hope of finding Olahla still alive, or even some clue to her whereabouts, if still in the land of the living.

The vast trunks of *guayacans* still burned slowly after the thatched roof had disappeared, and would burn for months to come. The rumour even spread itself long afterwards that a smoke still arose from the ruins after five years and all their rains had passed over them. Be this as it may, at least we could get no news of the girl, and the spot whereon she must have stood when she waved a farewell to us was now a fiercely blazing mass of thatch and rafters.

Leaving Diego to pursue his task as he might, I washed my begrimed face and hands in a totuma of water which I found in an outhouse, and took my way back to mine uncompleted task.

Vaulting lightly through the window again, I took up my pen and proceeded to collect my thoughts and the bits of parchment that I had left lying about, when, suddenly, I became aware that some discussion was on hand in the adjoining room. Giving somewhat closer attention, out of idle curiosity, to

learn who was with the General, but with no desire or inclination for eaves-dropping, I made out the General's voice,—“So thou sawest these two set fire to the place with malicious intent, didst say?”

Ha,—an investigation on foot already! I had credited the affair to the jeques.

Then a voice I knew only too well: “Ay, your Excellency. I saw them so near at hand that there could be no mistake, coming from the interior of the Temple when the flames first burst forth, and these two who chanced to be there can vouch for the fact. Miguel Sánchez and Juan Rodríguez Parra, excellent soldiers, your Excellency,—men of proven integrity and worth.”

Then there came a pause, and I make no doubt the General looked into the souls of the liars who stood before him, for as liars I was soon to know them. Finally he spoke again.

“Miguel Sánchez and Juan Parra,—stand forth and say what ye know of this matter!”

With that I heard the voice of one of the two whom I knew to be the first named, a brave enough soldier, no doubt, but one I little trusted, and methought his tone was not as confident nor his voice as steady as they might have been. He seemed somewhat over-anxious, too, to relate such trifling matters as should give an appearance of verisimilitude to his tale.

“Your Excellency, it was about an hour ago, mayhap. Friend Juan and I were seated somewhat apart and were finishing the last bits of our meal. I got up from where I had sat upon the ground and wiped my hands upon my jerkin, for they were somewhat greasy because we had had the fortune to come upon

a tasty bit of fat venison for our supper. We were upon sentinel duty with license to care for the inner man, as you know, your Excellency, we being but few and the great house not like a wench's waist to be easily encompassed, begging your Excellency's pardon. I am but a rough and honest soldier, and such are soldiers' ways in peace or war. So, as I turned away from the fire, I saw what seemed a shadow pass in the shade of the Temple. With that I sprang forward, but found nothing, and so came back to the fire. Yet could I not stay quietly there, and oft and again must go to the great logs that stood on end to form the walls and look through the chinks to see if there was aught amiss. Having done this some four or five times,—it may have been five, or was it four, comrade?—I turned me away the fourth or fifth time, as I have said, when, of a sudden, a light flashed through the logs and, turning back, I saw these two knights, Don Gonzálo de Cabrera and Don Diego de Alarcón, striking fire to two great torches they carried, and, ere I could sound the alarm, they had thrust them amongst the cloths that hung upon the wall, and then, casting them into a pile of matting upon the floor, they took to themselves those of Villadiego and disappeared. Saint Augustine to witness!

"Upon this I turned again, and there was this comrade with his face at another opening of the logs, for he had seen all that I saw.

"For a moment we had no speech because of our terror at the deed, and then the crackling of the flames brought us to our senses and we came a-running, only to find that the alarm had been given and our men were already commencing to bring out what

things of value they could. We fell to and helped, and 'tis only now that we have been able to tell our story to Captain Manrique and to your Excellency. Is it not so, your Worship? Is it not so, friend Juan?"

"As true as Evangel, your Excellency," responded the other, and Manrique vouched for both.

Now I was so taken aback that for very amaze at the effrontery of these three, (for I doubted not that the three were in league), I knew not for a moment which way to turn. Then I bethought me of the window and knew that there was yet time to escape, yet was I not minded to wander again by night amongst the hills and valleys of the Cordillera, and second thought told me that to flee was to acknowledge my guilt, so I took up my pen and set myself to my task, resolutely closing mine ears to what was going on in the next room.

After a few moments, however, I heard the firm, clear voice of the Licenciado:

"Bring these two straightway to my presence, Captain Manrique!"

With that I sprang to my feet and thrust open the door between us.

"Pardon, your Excellency, but I could not avoid hearing a part of that which hath been said. I am at your command."

With this I glanced about for mine enemy, but he had slipped out in haste to fetch us and, presently, he returned with Diego between two soldiers, one of whom bore his sword, which was handed to the General as he entered.

Now it would have been hard to say which of all of us was the least amazed, and perhaps I had

the vantage, and held most of the threads of the plot.

The General knew not that I had returned to my task, having looked into the room, as I afterwards learned, when Manrique began his story. Diego knew naught whatever of the matter, save that we were again in bad odour. The two soldiers were dumfounded to see me appear as if by magic in the General's own quarters, and Manrique knew not whence I had sprung nor whether mine appearance boded evil or good. Having him thus disoriented was rich meat in my belly, so I made shift to put on a light and jaunty air and waited to see what would come of the matter.

Silence fell at first upon us all, and then the General spoke in softest tones, but with a baleful light gleaming in his dark, clear eye.

"Stand forth, Miguel Sánchez and Juan Rodríguez Parra, and turn out those bulging pockets upon the ground! Ye know the law and regulation of this expedition!"

All the confidence and colour upon the faces of the two unfortunate wretches fled upon the word and returned not. Pale and trembling, they glanced first at the General, as if seeking pity, and then at the Captain, as though appealing to him for help; but, if they expected aught of Manrique, they knew him not as we did, for he returned their gaze coldly and indifferently, and turned his head away, as if in very shame for having had aught to do with them. At sight of this, he who had been glib enough before, fell upon his knees and stammered words without meaning, while the other cried aloud for pardon and offered to confess all.

"It needeth not a confession," said the General, coldly, "yet I will hear thee out. Speak on!"

"'Twas he, your Excellency," cried the man, "Miguel Sánchez himself, who set the place on fire; yet he meant it not, but it fell about in this wise: we had been set nigh to a small gate or opening in the wall, which was a gate or opening yet did not seem to be so. That is to say, your Excellency, we did not know of its existence when we were set there to guard the place, but about an hour ago, it may have been more or it may have been less, but it was not two hours, nor yet was it so short a space of time as half an hour, but may have been, as I have said, about an hour or thereabouts, more or less as the case may be, Juan Parra there, or Juan the Ram as we call him because his head is hard, not that his head itself is hard, but only that it taketh time for wisdom to penetrate his cranium——"

The poor fellow's fright was so great that he was becoming hopelessly involved, and there seemed to be no hope of getting at his tale.

"On, man, with thy history!" said the General, sternly. "This is no time for thee to fabricate a great rubric below thy name. Give us the essentials!"

"Pardon, your Excellency, pardon! I shall make haste. Juan Parra then, or the Ram, called me to know what it was that was happening on his side of the fire and, with that, I looked and saw a small door in the act of closing, in the side of the wall. He said that an old man and a maid had entered in thereat, and, as he knew not whether they were spirit or human, he had let them pass, until they disappeared altogether. I told him what I thought of

him, and yet, while thus engaged, I delayed not to examine the wall where the door should have been and, in very truth, found that there was a small opening nicely closed, which I made shift to pry open with the blade of my dagger. It seemed good to us then to take brands from the fire and, with the help of their light, see what had become of the two that had entered, lest they do some harm to the place. We followed this counsel, thinking no evil, but, having come across some bits of emeralds, we thrust certain of them in our pockets to bring to your Excellency with our report of the matter and, whilst we were thus occupied, the torch of the comrade fell upon the mats and set the place to burning.

"Immediately we fled to give the alarm, but saw that Captain Manrique stood at the door and we must needs tell him some invention which might serve to divert suspicion from ourselves. Knowing, therefore, that there was enmity between the Captain and these two gentlemen, and thinking that they were justly accused of treachery, we thought it no harm to lay the burden of the matter upon them.

"Pardon, your Excellency! Here are the stones;" and with that the wretch poured out upon the ground a glittering heap from all his pockets, and, his comrade following his example, both remained upon their knees in abject fear. 'Twas marvellous that those who had so often shown such valour in the presence of the enemy should now so debase themselves with cowardice, but such is the effect of crime and duplicity.

I looked at Manrique to see what effect the tale would have upon him, but on his cold, handsome

face could see no sign to tell whether he was party to or victim of the plot, with us his enemies.

The General also looked at him for a moment, as if in doubt, but, appearing satisfied at length, turned to the soldiers who had brought Diego.

"Bind these two and guard them well! They die at sunrise. Gentlemen, I felicitate ye and myself that this hath been no worse. Don Gonzálo, thy presence here would have been thy safeguard in any case. And now, your leave, and I would be alone. Don Gonzálo, thy work can wait the daylight. May all rest well save these poor wretches, who, to glut the covetous appetites of two baseborn curs, have lost to Spain and to their comrades such plunder as would have made Pizarro die of envy and Cortéz count his wealth as dross, and then have crowned this baseness with betrayal of their comrades."

At break of day we loaded our treasure upon the backs of the Indians, whom we had impressed for the service, and, leaving two livid Spanish corpses swinging on *lazos* from the palisade, nigh to the smoking ruins, we made our way back to Tunja and there rejoined our comrades, who greeted us with shouts of joy and acclamations.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RANSOM OF THE ZIPA

WHEN we reached Bogotá, the General decided to divide the accumulated treasure, and, accordingly, the gold was separated into portions and the emeralds were then divided in like proportion, as well as the General was able to judge of their value, but many of the men and officers gave their shares to the General that he might employ his interest in their favour upon his return to Spain, for he had already planned a speedy return at the most favourable moment.

Many of the others gamed away their portion and were free of it ere another sun had risen, but, as for me, I bethought me that a bird in the hand was worth a hundred flying, and I would neither give to the General what I had so hardly won, nor risk it on the casting of the dice, but buried it most carefully in a place easy for me to find again, and Diego and Juan de Dios did the like, as well as some others of the company.

Shortly after this it happened that Captains Maldonado and Lázaro Fonte saw amongst the green bushes of the swamp two objects that at first they took to be wild animals, but, setting after them on their horses, they ran them down and found them to be two Indians, whom they captured and brought to the camp. Upon questioning them we found that they were spies sent by the Cacique of Muequetá to

learn what they could of us and our manner of fighting.

Suspecting, therefore, that they knew the whereabouts of the Zipa, the General enquired of them, to whom the elder replied that it was not proper for them to reveal his hiding-place. Upon this the General very properly put them to the torture, which the elder resisted to the death, but the younger cared more for his life than for that of his King, and offered to lead us to the place.

Gathering together immediately all the horse and foot that he could spare from the camp, the General set out with us early in the evening and came to the fortification where the Zipa abode, which was nigh to Facatativá, across the Sabána, some seven leagues or so from our camp.

Here we found an enormous number of Indians, who were exceedingly terrified at our approach, and comported themselves like madmen, running hither and thither and crying aloud like beings possessed and out of their senses. Most of them fled to the mountains, and with them the miserable Zipa himself, with a handful of his nobles and most faithful attendants; but by chance they fell directly in the way of a company of our people, whereupon a cross-bowman, one Domínguez, let fly at a venture amongst the mass of frightened natives and the bolt passed between them all and entered the back of the Zipa himself. He, feeling himself wounded to death, commanded his followers to bear him away in a litter to the mountains, and there he breathed his life out in great pain and suffering, whereas he might have had a better fortune had he wisely yielded himself and been bathed in the holy water of baptism.

At the time we knew nothing of his death, but ransacked the place without finding much of value save a totuma of gold and abundant provisions, which, while they satiated the hunger of the soldiers, did naught to satisfy their thirst for gold.

Returning to Bogotá, we were soon informed of the death of the Zipa, by women who came to our camp, whereat our leader was grieved, because he had desired to make a treaty with him, and now that he was dead, he could not do so.

Soon after, however, a cacique called Sagipa seized upon the sovereignty, although the Cacique of Chía was rightfully the heir, and, to establish himself upon the throne, sought an alliance with us. He sent a rich present to the General, and was received with great joy, obtaining by his condescension the promise of our support. It was not many days, however, before the General arrested him for having wrongfully seized the crown, and this so frightened the Chibchas that they all forsook us and, leaving their King a prisoner in our hands, disappeared every one. Quesada then took counsel of history and demanded of him a great ransom in gold and emeralds, which he gladly promised and agreed to fill a circular hut, five varas in circumference, half full of gold, and add three large totumas full of fine emeralds. Accordingly, he asked leave to send word to his servants in order that they might bring the gold. The General let him send word and call certain of those who were in his confidence to his prison, so that he might instruct them to bring the gold.

As for the Zipa, he demanded that he should be allowed to accumulate the gold in an inner room of

the prison, and that no one should go nigh it for forty days, because otherwise the soldiers might take some of it ere the count was complete, and, in this case, it would be impossible for him to keep his word, as he thought he had scarce enough in his possession to make good his contract.

The General readily agreed to this, and each day there came an Indian sweating under a great load of clinking metal plates wrapped in cloths and, passing by the covetous and gaping soldiers, threw it down upon the floor of the little room which opened into that in which the Zipa was confined.

I knew naught of this whole matter, however, for I had been suddenly clapped into prison again, some days before,—Diego being gone upon an expedition with one of the Captains.

I was well enclosed in an inner room, without a window of any sort, save a barred opening in the ceiling. An immediate inspection of my prison convinced me that there was no hope of escape here, and I must needs await my fate with what patience I could. A low cot was set along one side of the room and other furnishing there was none, but the food that was given me was not bad, and was more than sufficient for my need.

Fortune had of late played me so many scurvy tricks that I was somewhat used to prison fare and captivity, save that, hitherto, I had had companionship, and that of the best, whereas now I must make shift to enjoy mine own company as best I might, and, having a clear conscience, this was easier for me than it would have been for those who put me there, had our positions been reversed. Well,—*nec semper lilia floret*, and—by reversal—

Thus I passed some seven or eight lonely days, occupied with my thoughts and with such physical exercise as I could get to keep my chilled blood a-moving, and my great limbs from getting cramped.

It may have been the seventh or eighth day of my captivity when I heard the jingling sound of metal falling upon the floor in the adjacent room, or so it seemed to me. This was followed by more sounds of a similar sort and somewhat like noises that a peddler of brass pots would make, sorting over his wares. After a quarter of an hour all became silent and I gave the matter but little thought, but about the same time the next day, or thereabouts, there came the same parcel of noises, and then quiet as before. At this my curiosity was somewhat stirred and, because there was naught else to divert me, I drew the cot to the wall whence the sounds that I had heard came, and set to with mine old friend, the dagger, which had come to me from the henchman of Don Alonzo Luís de Lugo, to open some sort of a hole in the wall.

The beams were of iron-wood and resisted all mine efforts, but they were not hewn as true as ours of Spain, and the cracks were filled with adobe, well-dried and hard. This I soon loosened with my knife and, having gone through the wall, came out on the other side with a hole about the size of my thumb. Thereupon I desisted from my labour and applied mine eye to the hole. I was well rewarded for dulling the edge of my faithful knife, with a view of nothing and plenty of it.

As far as mine eye could fetch a compass about the room, all that I could see was dust and dusk and a bare floor, with walls about, much like mine

own prison. Far from satisfying my curiosity, it was now wrought up to a high pitch. Setting to work again with my knife, I soon had enough adobe out of the hole to let me see the chief part of the room, but, as before, I could see nothing in it. Mine eyes, long since accustomed to the meagre light of prisons, searched out every corner greedily, but with ill-success as before. At last I threw myself upon my cot and mused upon the problem, but still without light.

Either the spirits of the dead held sway and the murdered Zipa came to count his hidden treasure, or else the men-at-arms came and tossed pots and pans about for a quarter of an hour each day. Hardly the latter, methought, and I laughed as I lay there at the odd notion, for pots and pans had been strangers to us since we left Santa Marta, and all that our kitchen could afford would have been some odd bits of red earthenware.

Finally I gave it up and closed the hole by thrusting a bit of cotton cloth smeared in adobe dust into the place, so that my work would not be too apparent to one entering the neighbouring apartment.

On the following day, as the hour approached for the strange noises to be heard, I thrust aside the cloth a wee bit with the point of my dagger and glanced along it to the door, which came almost in line. I was not disappointed, nor had I long to wait. Punctually, as before, the strange visitor made his appearance, but this time I had eyes to aid mine ears. The door flew open wide and upon the threshold there appeared no less a personage than the great Cacique of the Chibchas himself, as I knew by the splendour of his apparel, the haughtiness of

his mien, and the gems which ornamented his person. Of his captivity and presence in the building of course I knew naught, as I have said, but thought only on hidden treasure and secret visits by the great chieftain to bear it away to a place of safety.

Whilst I thus romanced to myself, but a little moment had passed, and now I saw him step aside and make way for a sturdy Indian, who bore upon his bent back a great bundle done up in a cotton mantle. Sweat ran freely from his glistening forehead, although the day was fresh as always upon the Sabána.

Slowly the slave advanced into the apartment and cast down his burden upon the floor with a great jangle of metal. Turning the bundle bottom-side upward, he let the contents roll upon the floor. Gold plates and ornaments in profusion and emeralds of the finest that I had ever seen, showered upon the bare boards in a delicious stream of wealth which made my very heart and entrails warm to see. Yet I was sore amazed to see such treasure brought into our midst instead of being carried away, and must needs form a new theory upon this and let the old one slip.

The safest place is the one least likely to be sought, so here was the wily chieftain concealing his treasures in our very midst. What followed knocked this theory also upon the head, so I let it lie there, stricken, and set myself to watching what might happen further, with mine eyes to aid my wit.

A considerable number of armed warriors, which seemed to be the escort of the slave, now entered the room. Of these I counted as many as thirty and, when the last one had entered, in the twinkling

of an eye, the door was shut and each one gathered up a portion of the treasure, so that what had come in with one might go out with thirty. Having concealed the stuff about their persons so cleverly that it made not a sound nor showed any sign, the whole thirty left the room with the slave, and the door was shut upon the last by the Zipa himself.

Now, at last, my poor wit began to see light, for I remembered the tales of Pizarro and the ransom of Atahualpa. At first I laughed to think of the trick that was being played upon our worthy General, for I remembered his great injustice to myself; then I burned with indignation as I thought of how this great treasure must be forever lost to us, and how we were being played upon by a common barbarian who was as unlettered as the veriest dolt of a peasant that might be found in Old Spain.

How to get word to the General was the question. Would my warder carry it? When he came I offered him a bit of an emerald that I had about me to do me the service and bear word to the General that I had information of state import to barter for my freedom.

The villain took the gem, but I saw naught of the General, as the days went by, and every day I saw a repetition of the same farce, the same bit of jugglery that was hoodwinking my companions; and, although I took him well to task and threatened him with my vengeance upon obtaining my liberty, my knave of a jailor swore that he had delivered my message, and I could believe naught else at last, and must conclude that the General would not hear me.

Thus some four or five weeks went by since the Indian had commenced to bring the treasure and bear it away again, and now a gleam of hope came at last. My attendant jailor was changed, because the first was taken sick, and I trust that he died of his ailment: for I had no time to attend to him when at last I came out of my confinement.

With the other man, an honest enough soldier, I made a new bargain. Jewels I had no more about me, but I offered him two good ducats' worth of gold and a fine green stone, when I should be free, if he would take my message to the General, and I bade him add these words, "Remember Tunja and Sogamoso!"

With my request the good fellow readily complied, and would not have my gold. "Nay, nay," he said, "it is not forbidden to a soldier to communicate with his superior, and 'twould be but a low and scurvy trick to take advantage of the necessities of a comrade in misfortune. I'll bring you word of the matter at the first opportunity."

The next day a surly brute, from whom I would ask no favours, took his place, and let me know, with an evil leer, that the other was but my jailor for a day. I heard nothing of the General for several days, and lost all hope. Upon the thirty-fifth day of the visits of the Indians, to my great surprise, the bar fell from the door and the General himself entered and stood before it, peering into the darkness until his eyes became accustomed and he could make me out, and then he spoke coldly and to the point:

"What is this of Tunja and Sogamoso, Don Gonzálo?"

"Your Excellency," I replied, "I have sent for you that I might do the King and yourself a service, although I have not yet been informed why I am thus secluded. Six weeks have gone since I was deprived of my liberty, and none is come to accuse me nor to ask of me a defence. May I know of what I am adjudged guilty?"

"I came not here to hear these matters, nor to try thy case, sirrah. Come to the point and let me know what thou hast to reveal."

"Your Excellency," I again replied, firmly, "the message I sent spoke of my liberty as well, and a scalded cat fears even cold water."

A dark look of anger came upon the General's face and he frowned heavily. "Believe me, a suppliant would be more likely to find grace than one who demands it in such terms. To the point at once, or we must disagree!"

"Pardon again, I pray, if I maintain my ground upon this point, your Excellency. You are always just, if not deceived." I saw him start to turn away. "Bear with me a moment longer! I seek not to rehearse my feats of arms; my constant loyalty; my services to the expedition, and the unjust and untrue accusations which have caused my former loss of favour. I call to your mind merely the fact that I cannot defend myself because I know not why I am in custody, and offer for a patient hearing and my liberty—for I am surely innocent of all design of evil—that valuable information which is now in my power."

The General hesitated and looked thoughtful, and I saw a change upon his stern face. Finally he spoke, "That which thou askest I cannot altogether

grant, for reasons of state; yet, in part, I shall consent thereto if thou——"

At this moment I heard the door in the next room open and realised that the time had come for the daily visit.

"Hist!" I said, in warning, and laying my hand upon the bunch of cloth, motioned the General to crouch beside me.

Realising in an instant that something out of the common was on foot, Quesada forgot his dignity for the moment, and crouched upon his knees, whilst I pried the rag aside in the aperture. Glancing through the hole I saw the Zipa in the doorway, and then drew my head aside and signed to Quesada to take my place. Without a moment's hesitation or any sign of distrust, the Licenciado stooped and fixed his eye at the hole, whence he removed it not again until I heard the door close and knew that the farce was over for the day.

"'Tis well," he said, between his set teeth, as he turned away; "thou hast seen the play and thou shalt hear the epilogue. I release thee on thy parole. Thou art free and pardoned if thou art guilty, but I must have thy parole, thy knightly word, to say naught of this nor of those things which must come of it. As for thy crime,—it is suspected complicity with treason, the principal in which is in custody and will presently be brought to justice."

With that he called the jailor and bade him pass me forth.

How good and glad the light of day came to my bewildered eyes as I stepped into the great court, walking at the General's side!

As the General left me, one started forward and

crossed to him, whose lithe and graceful figure I well knew. 'Twas Manrique, and he stayed the General with a familiar touch upon his arm. I saw him glance at me and argue hotly with his chief, but, apparently, without profit, for Quesada frowned, shook his head, and went on, and Manrique glanced darkly at me and returned to his companions.

"So-ho, so-ho!" said I to myself, said I,—“hast not forgotten thy former perilous game, and must needs mix in my fortunes again. Well,—’tis a long road that turneth neither to the right hand nor to the left. I bear thee in a sacred place in my memory. Adios!” and I set off to my quarters, which I found deserted, save for the old Indian servant who cared for them.

From her I learned that Diego had been placed under arrest about a week since, on his return from an expedition upon which he had been sent before I was placed in confinement. So now I knew that it was he who was held to be the principal in some hatched-up case of treason, and I guilty of complicity solely because he was mine other self and I his.

My soul burned within me with anger, and I stamped upon the floor in my wrath, and, seizing my sword, swung it about until the air whistled upon the edge of it, and the old woman feared that she might lose an ear or her head, and fled shrieking to the kitchen.

This frenzy endured but for a moment, for I have ever been inclined to take things less hotly than the Spaniard, because of my northern blood, and I knew no good could come of open rebellion; so I sheathed my sword and set myself to think if I could devise

any way to help Diego. Whilst I was busied about this, there came a messenger from the General requesting mine immediate presence.

I found the General at headquarters in the Council Room with a number of the Captains, to whom, it appeared, he had said nothing of what he had seen. Rising as I entered, he immediately led the way towards the quarters of the Zipa. Entering without ceremony or the ordinary show of respect, he demanded to be shown the treasure that was already accumulated.

To this the Zipa replied haughtily that his bargain was not yet completed, but that he would let him see the treasure at the end of the full time. At this reply the General's face grew dark with rage, and for the moment he lost his stirrups. Then, with a fierce oath, he smote the Zipa with a rod which he had in his hand, and called a soldier to scourge the chieftain well, at which all were amazed but myself.

Answering their looks with a motion of the hand, Quesada flung open the inner door and cried out to the Captains: "Behold, gentlemen all, our noble treasure—the ransom of an emperor!" and he pointed to the bare walls and empty floor, whereat the Zipa, smarting under the well-earned and well-applied chastisement, cried out that he had been robbed by our men of all that he had accumulated there, but, seeing that this tale would not be swallowed, he declared that it was a trick of his rivals, the two chiefs, Caximimpaba and Cusinmegua, who desired his death and had devised this thing to compass it.

When the Captains learned fully of the trick that had been played upon them, they were even more

greatly enraged than the General, and would have borne the Zipa apart on their swords had not Quesada prevented them.

"Hold, hold!" he cried; "wouldst slay the goose that yet may lay the golden eggs? Come,—let us to the Council Room with the prisoner! Follow me!" and he led the way forth again, followed by all of us, wondering what he would do, and the men-at-arms leading the forlorn and suffering Emperor.

In the Council Room we all sat down and waited whilst the General sent for the two chiefs who had been named by the Zipa and, when they were come, accused them of the crime, but they maintained that they knew nothing of it, and of this fact Quesada was very well aware, but he put them to the torture and, as they still asseverated their innocence, he concluded that the Zipa might come to terms more readily if his rivals were at once put out of his way, so he hanged them both in front of the palace, upon one tree.

The Zipa, who had undoubtedly arranged the whole matter in the hope of finding some way of escape without the sacrifice of his treasures, now confidently asked the General to let him go to his people that he might compel their obedience, and the General, in his desire to obtain at least a portion of the treasure, risked even this, and sent him heavily guarded, and with a halter about his neck, but he only guided them to the edge of a precipice, down which he sought to cast himself; but the soldiers pulled him back by the rope, without much injury, and brought him in again to the General.

Upon this Quesada resolved to temporise no longer, and therefore brought him to the Council

Room the next day, and there he applied red-hot horseshoes to the soles of his feet to make him tell where the treasure was, but he would not, and died ere we had finished with him, for the General still hoped to gain further information.

These matters so occupied the minds of all of us that we scarce had thought of Diego, and I could get no word of him at all by the most careful enquiries. I dared not approach the General on the subject, especially after the affair of the Zipa, which left him in a very black humour indeed, so that he was not good company for his friends for some time.

To ease his conscience, perhaps, for what he had done to the Zipa, which, while quite well deserved by the treacherous Prince, no doubt lost to us the most important convert to Christianity we might have had, because, if the General had waited until the priests had gained the captive's consent to baptism ere he urged the matter of the treasure with the hot horseshoes, he might have made a Catholic of him ere he proceeded with the other matter; but what is done, is done, and so, I say, to ease his conscience of the matter, the General now set about founding a City in regular form, calling the place Santa Fé, after his own Granadan city. He took possession in the name of the Emperor; erected twelve houses and a small church, and had the first mass said, in the year 1538.

All this time I could get no word of Diego, but, when this business of the foundation of the City was over, the General had him brought forth from confinement and, adjudging him guilty of treason, on I know not what evidence, sentenced him to be

beheaded for having received a ransom from an Indian, consisting of a fine emerald, which he had concealed instead of turning it into the general treasury,—this being a crime punishable with death.

When I heard of the deed, I knew that there must be a conspiracy against him, because the alleged crime was said to have been committed after the time of mine own arrest for complicity in the treason, and hence it was evident that the real charge did not appear at all.

When the news of his condemnation spread over the camp, all were greatly distressed and alarmed for Diego, who was a general favourite, and it was well understood by this time that he had an enemy in the counsels of the General.

Finally, the Captains came together to the General and, after eulogising him who was condemned, begged their commander to commute the sentence of their friend, which he finally consented to do, seeing that it was somewhat perilous for him to refuse their request. Diego was, therefore, exiled to a certain village of the Panches, whence he was expected never to return.

CHAPTER XX

RETRIBUTION

THE General gave orders that Diego should be conducted to the village of Pasca, a town of the Panches, in custody of twenty-four soldiers, of whom I was one. With us went an old Indian woman, who had been our servant for a long time, and who also served as interpreter.

All knew that the chances for his escape from the man-eating savages were but one in a thousand, and hence he was but little better off than a criminal led to execution; but, while there is life there is hope, and there are at least a few left alive after every battle. When we reached Pasca we found that the fear of our arms was so great that the town had been completely abandoned at our approach. Here I resolved to remain with my comrade, and so our escort left us with friendly farewells and such grief as brought tears to the eyes of many of them.

We passed the night in one of the houses of the village, in hourly expectation of the return of the natives, but, as morning approached and they came not, we bethought us of a ruse which might be of service, and at least could do us no harm.

Diego made the woman deck herself in all her ornaments, and in some clothing which we found in one of the houses, so that she seemed to be of the family of some chieftain, at least, and then sent her to wait at the chief entrance to the town.

A little after daybreak the people of the town began to return to spy out the place, and the woman called to them and made signs to them to approach, and then told them that her masters, who were the best ones of all the Spaniards, had been sent to them because they were the only ones of all, who held the opinion that the caciques should not be destroyed and their people plundered, and hence, to punish them for being contrary to the General-in-chief, he had condemned them to exile "amongst their Panche friends," that they might learn by their own experience that any who fell into their hands would be cut to pieces and eaten before their own living eyes, until they could resist no longer the pain and loss of blood.

To her words the Indians gave complete credit, for how else could they explain our advent, and, having assured the woman of their pleasure and satisfaction, they engaged to supply all our necessities if we would remain amongst them, all of which promises they faithfully fulfilled. Thus we dwelt there at ease and all paid us deference and treated us with all friendship and kindness, for which we gave most earnest thanks to God.

In spite of all this, it was difficult to see what the end of the business would be, or what might come of a sudden change in their fickle regard for us, for who mixes with chaff will most certainly be trampled by hogs.

One day, however, there came runners to the town saying that there was come a great company of Spaniards from the plains lying to the east, with horses and dogs such as we had. Diego and I counselled upon this strange bit of news and resolved at last

to send word at once to the General of their coming. To this end we prepared a bit of well-tanned deer's hide, and wrote upon it with red ochre:

"MI SEÑOR: I have certain news that a company of Spaniards be come by way of the Eastern plains and are near at hand. It may be that they will arrive on the morrow."

This we gave to the Indian woman and sent her post-haste to Bogotá.

There was but little likelihood that any answer to our message would arrive before the next day, and night was already beginning to fall when a party of Indians came straggling up the street, bearing in their bloody hands fragments of torn garments and bits of broken armour. The glint of the armour in the light of the dying sun attracted mine attention, as I stood at the door, and, calling Diego, I halted the Indians and bade them tell me where they had found the articles.

The brutal creatures showed no signs of embarrassment, for they thought of the Spaniards as our mutual enemies, so they directed us with great glee, pointing with their hands and then indicating their mouths and their stomachs, and presently made clear to us that they were come to invite some of the principal men to a banquet which was preparing.

"Come, Gonzálo, ere it be too late! We may save some unfortunate comrade-in-arms!" cried Diego, starting down the street at a run in the direction indicated by the Indians. I followed him, and we had not gone far before we came to three horses tethered to a tree and, a bit farther on, there was a group of Indians gathered about three Spaniards who were tied to stakes.

Two of them were already dead, for the Indians had stripped them and cut flesh from their living bodies, and this they had been eating before the very eyes of its mutilated owners. The third Spaniard, although badly mutilated, was still alive, and rolled his ghastly eyes about in a face that had been stripped of skin, and showed only the bare and bloody muscles and flesh underneath. Bits of flesh had been hacked from other parts of his body, but it was evident that he was being spared until the arrival of other guests at the banquet.

As we came in sight, we were greeted with shouts of joy and the Indians, dancing and gesticulating, pointed in triumph to their victims, and then showed us the horses and made clear to us that we were to have these last for ourselves. Not content with these evidences of friendship, they offered us also choice bits from their feast, which we declined with as slight an expression of disgust as possible.

While this was going on, the groaning of the injured man ceased, and from his bleeding lips came forth a cry like to that of a lost soul in hell,—“In the name of the Virgin of Sorrows, and by the pains of Calvary, have mercy on me! Put me out of my misery or deliver me from these accursed fiends!”

At the sound of the voice, Diego gripped me by the arm.

“Manrique!” he exclaimed, “so thou hast come to this!”

“Ay, for my sins,—I am brought low in the presence of mine enemy. I have digged a pit and am fallen in it. In the name of mercy, give me water!” We thought he referred to his former machinations, but more was to be revealed. Whilst Diego went

with his hat to fetch him water, I explained to the Indians as well as I could that we wished information from the man before he died, and this they understood well enough, and offered no objection to our act of mercy.

"What are you doing here, Captain Manrique?" I asked, after we had given him a few swallows of the water,—“to fall thus into the hands of the savages?"

"What matters it now?" he replied. "Ay, what doth it matter? Ye may as well know, then, that I came post-haste on receipt of your message, and brought these two knaves that are now stinking carrion in the hands of these human vultures, that I might not be balked of my revenge, for I knew that ye were pardoned, and that I was discovered, and I thought that I could come where ye were and strike ye unaware. Give me more water!"

"And now you confess it, and ask mercy?" I said, in scorn.

"Confess it? Ay, confess anything for a drop of water! Cut me loose and stay this burning, and I'll confess that I am Satan himself!"

"No need to confess what is well evident," muttered Diego, in an aside to me as he went to bring more water.

As for me, I was turning over in my mind the possibility of saving the wretch, and with this end in view, examined his injuries to see if aught could be done for him, for I liked but little to jeopardise our own safety by any act of interference only to prolong for a few hours his dying agony, and, on the other hand, it revolted me to see Spanish blood and brawn pass into the maws of these filthy savages.

I soon satisfied myself that his injuries must necessarily be fatal, and of this I apprised Diego on his return.

"Look ye here, Manrique!" said he, when I had satisfied him that there was no hope for our ancient enemy, "thou knowest me well and I tell thee plainly, if thou hast a prayer to make or aught to say, say them now, for thou hast not long to live! It is doubtful if we can stay the hands of the savages in any case, and they are now returning to finish their meal. But if we succeed in saving thy life, at peril of our own, it is but for a few hours that thou hast on earth. If it will console thee, know that I forgive thee for thy baseness and thy treachery. As for my cousin, I take it that she is already punished. A divine hand hath taken these matters out of mine and thine, and who am I that I should not be satisfied?"

"Water! Water!" groaned the dying man. "I thank thee, Diego. Do not tell her how I died! Tell her that I died in battle, or in sudden ambush, that she may tell my sons. One favour more! Save my carcase from these vile fiends, if thou canst!"

"I will! I will! Rely upon it and set thy mind at rest," replied Diego, with some show of emotion.

"Then smite me with thy sword, and I leave the rest to thee! But stay,—in the breast of my doublet there is a packet of papers that concern thee. Care for my wife and sons. Now, farewell, and smite quickly!"

By this time the Indians had gathered about and were showing some signs of impatience at the delay which we were causing.

Diego turned to me,—“I cannot strike him down like this, because of ancient memories, and because

he hath injured me: besides this, he is the father of mine own kin. Do thou strike him!"

"Very well," I replied. "It is a mercy to him, and a favour to thee, but belike it may cost us dear."

With that I drew my sword and thought to smite the suffering wretch beneath the fifth rib, but I could not do it.

A clamour arose amongst the Indians at sight of the motion that I had made; nevertheless, the two of us stood shoulder to shoulder and explained that this was our ancient enemy and we claimed the right to dispose of him. On this the murmuring began anew at the prospect of the loss of a choice bit like him, and it seemed as though we were destined to serve as after-table to them. With this aspect of affairs, I bade Diego hold them back in front whilst I cut Manrique down, and this I started to do when an arrow struck upon mine armour and, glancing from it, buried itself in the neck of their victim. His head fell forward on his breast, as I cut him down. Turning about, I flung him across my shoulder and, crying to Diego to run, I set off toward the town with my mightiest stride, Diego running by my side, and a whole rabble of Indians flocking after us.

I know not why I turned toward the town, and I know not what expectation there was of escape, but be that as it may, we reached our quarters ahead of our pursuers and shut the door in their faces, barricading it in the best manner possible.

Throwing my gruesome burden upon the floor, I turned to think of the defence, and soon we had every aperture closed, and were ready to sell our lives as dearly as we might, yet there came no sign

of an attack from without. Certain of ultimately taking us, they had withdrawn their forces, save a few guards, and were gone to complete their orgy over the bodies of the two Spaniards.

We surmised that they would not at once burn us out, because of their fear of setting on fire the whole town, which was roofed with thatch; and it seemed that we had guessed rightly, for they all returned a little before midnight, and set about tearing down the adjoining houses. This occupied them for some time and, when they had finished, they left us until morning, in order that we might not be able to escape in the darkness when they smoked us out of our refuge.

When we saw that they had all gone away, save those who were left to guard us, we debated what we should do. I was for setting fire to the place and cutting our way out in the confusion, leaving Manrique's body to burn in the ashes of the house, but Diego thought that the forces of the General would be with us in the morning, when we might hope either for rescue or that the Indians, advised by their spies of their approach, would not dare to attack us.

"Hold hard, man!" I exclaimed, "for thou art forgetting that the Indians think that our comrades are our enemies, and that they will rejoice in our destruction."

"True, true! I had forgotten, but we should certainly stand the chance of a rescue, at any rate."

"Let us compromise, then," I said, "and when they come to attack us in the morning, we shall be ready to set fire to the thatch of the next house on the side where the wind will carry the flames from us for a time."

To accomplish this purpose we set to and made ready a good fire in the kitchen of the house, and, as there was no door save in front, we then cut the withes so that we could push the wall out on one side or the other and cast torches upon the neighbouring houses, so that surprise and our armour might shield us from the enemy.

Having arranged all this to our satisfaction, I took a survey of the Indians once more through a small hole in the front of the house. Fires burned at intervals in a circle about the place, illumining the scene perfectly. A complete cordon of savages invested us. At the fire which was nearest, one of the chief men sat, pulling over the clothing and stuff which they had taken from their victims.

Suddenly the chief drew out a flat packet from the pocket of a garment. At that moment I remembered the last words of Manrique and, by a sudden inspiration, connected them with the packet. Without an instant's hesitation, I began pulling down the barricade like a madman.

"What art thou doing, man?" Diego cried, in alarm.

"I'm after thy fortune, booby," I replied, and flung the door open.

With one bound I crossed the space between the door and the fire and laid my hand upon the precious packet, which the ancient savage had now succeeded in tearing open. The old fellow clung like grim death to his prize, and, for fear that I should tear the papers, I laid hold of the man by the heels, and in an instant was back in the cabin and had flung the door shut in the faces of the astonished Indians.

Turning to my captive, I found him sitting upon

the floor, somewhat bewildered, and holding the packet still in one hand, whilst with the other he wiped away the blood and dirt which he had collected on his face in his rather rapid transit, face downwards, to our door. I could not help but laugh as I saw him sitting there, but Diego was very cross about it.

"What in the name of all the Saints and a thousand devils art thou doing, madcap?" he asked, as he piled up the barricade against the door again.

For answer, I reached out my hand to the Indian for the packet, but he would not yet give it up, so I rose and kicked him in the stomach until he was doubled up like a clasp-knife, and then he let go of it and I handed it to Diego without looking at it.

"Here is thy heritage, Diego, lad," I said, laughing.

"How sayest thou, my heritage?" he asked, in amaze, but, as he spread the papers upon his knees, he uttered a cry of astonishment.

"Did I not tell thee?" I asked him, mockingly, to tease him a bit.

"And how knewest thou? By what divination didst thou suspect what is indeed the truth?" he asked.

"Did not Manrique say, 'Care for my wife and sons'? Why should a wealthy landholder ask such a thing of a poor adventurer like thee unless he meant to make restitution?"

"Well, thou art right, this time, for here are all the papers to set me straight in the matter of my father's inheritance. Here is my father's last testament, which was suppressed in favour of a fraudulent one, with a full confession of the whole matter,

and other papers as well, all of great consequence to me."

"Permit me to felicitate thee, old comrade!—but why should he bear about with him such damning evidence?"

"I know not. But stay! The writing is in his father's hand. Perchance the father used it to compel the son to do his bidding and, afterwards, surrendered it, and the son then held it to force his father. 'Tis like them both. In any case, here it is, and I thank thee for a brave deed which is likely to be thrown away, for here is the sun, and I hear no sound of the approach of the General's forces. God, indeed, gives nuts to them that have no teeth, and teeth to them that have no nuts."

Never did there seem to be a truer word, for the grey light of dawn was penetrating the chinks and crevices and already enabling us to dispense with the fire-light to examine our surroundings and the papers which had so miraculously fallen into our hands. At last there was a stir without, and I applied mine eye to the loop-hole, but could see nothing. Of a sudden Diego fell to sneezing, and I smelled smoke.

"They have anticipated us," I cried, "and we must make a dash for it!"

No sooner said than done. I could now see the Indians gathered close about the front of the house, which was the only exit of which they knew.

"Let us through the side and out the back way," I said, drawing my sword and putting my shoulder to the weak place in the wall. Diego thrust his precious papers into the breast of his doublet under his armour, and drew his sword also.

Slowly the room was filling with smoke. With a sudden effort I broke the wall, and we dashed out of the house and away from our astonished hosts, who piled after us as fast as they could run, leaving the body of our late enemy to be food for the flames, as well as the old chief, who still lay upon the floor, alive but somewhat in need of repair.

There is no night without a morning, and it is darkest just before dawn!

Down the street we flew, and barbed arrows beat upon our backs. At last we reached the place where the horses were still standing, tied to the trees as they were the night before, and here we ran headlong into the midst of a group of horsemen, who divided to let us pass, at sight of our armour, but interposed a mailed front to our pursuers.

Captain Gonzálo Suárez Rondón rode at the head of the party, and with him was a picked troop. There was a letter with them for Diego, giving him a full and free pardon, with the General's thanks for our news, and telling us that the accusations which had brought us to our present straits were now known to be false.

Diego shrugged his shoulders after perusing the tardy acknowledgment, and muttered, "Ay,—last year the toad bit him, and he is but just now beginning to swell."

Our men scattered right and left about the town, and took possession of the houses of the Indians, in order to set about preparing food for themselves. As for myself, after I had eaten, I lay down to rest in order to make up that sleep which I had lost the night before.

As I slept I dreamed, and in my dream my lib-

erated spirit flew to sunny Spain. Far out across the heaving billows of the Western Main it soared until its vision marked the distant hills and wavering coast-line afar amongst the mists that bound the Iberian peninsula. I know not why it paused not to visit the gilded isle which lay upon the hither side and held my hopes of the future: but wayward are the thoughts in slumber's realm, and wayward was my fancy.

Piercing the mists that lie along the shore, I flew o'er fishers' nets and fishers' homes and crossed broad valleys where the fields lay spread before me like a great counterpane of many-shaped and many-coloured patches. Over cot of peasant and thrifty farmhold,—over roads and bridges: nor moat, nor battlement of castle walls stayed its flight.

Far below me lay a town, and mightily I wondered that I could not hear the bustle in its streets; then, once again fled swiftly far afield my roving spirit and methought that it was night, although I saw full well as in the day, but, as the morning broke, I heard the cock crow to announce its coming.

Though all my dream was silent, yet the cock-crow was right lusty and seemed out of place. I rubbed mine eyes and stared about me.

There, upon the door-sill, stood a miserable cock, who flapped his tattered wings and crowed again in a voice which ill-comported with his person, for it was most magnificent.

As I knew that this domestic fowl was a creature unknown in this New Kingdom of Granada, I was sore amazed, but, seeing through the doorway many strange figures of my countrymen, clad in battered armour and skins of wild beasts, and hearing much

noise and confusion in the street, I sprang to my feet and looked out. Diego was coming toward me, but had stopped to gaze at the fowl which I had affrighted from the door.

"What is this, compadre?" I cried.

"We are invaded," he answered. "The hosts of Venezuela are upon us."

"Come they in peace or war?" I asked.

"It is not known as yet," he replied, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Our commanders are holding conference. But, judging from their looks, I will wager that an honest stew of venison and plantains will placate what warlike inclinations they may have."

"I have been sleeping and was wakened by the warlike note of yonder chanticleer, of most inglorious appearance. Whence came that bird?"

"One of the worthy friars amongst the Venezuelans hath brought it on his hand from La Guayra."

"Well, then, it must oft have been in peril of its life, if their straits have been at all like ours."

"Like ours and worse, I judge, from what the soldiers say. But let us to the conference!"

I linked mine arm in his, but had not gone ten paces ere I came upon one of the Venezuelans who had been a comrade of mine in the Moorish wars, and, before we reached the square, there was a little company of us grouped together who had met in Old Spain or in the Levant at some time or another.

We found that they had all been amazed beyond measure, as they rode into the town, to find it in possession of a Spanish force, and well might they be astonished to find such conditions at a distance of two hundred and fifty leagues from the Coast.

At the head of the strangers was Captain Pedro de Limpias, former conqueror of Venezuela, in command of the advance guard of Captain Nicolás de Fedreman, who was a German by birth, and now Lieutenant-General of the Governor of the Province of Venezuela, Don Jorge de Aspira.

Many of the soldiers found acquaintances amongst our men, and so we all fraternised, whilst a couple of our Captains set out with one of theirs to advise the General, who received them kindly and, having given them a present of cloths and gold, sent to call out the friendly chieftains to receive Fedreman.

When we approached the City, therefore, we found them all drawn up in martial array, some twenty thousand strong, with plumes and feather head-dresses and all their weapons and war-gear and instruments of music, and our men with them. All this had the effect upon the Venezuelans which our General desired, for, as they approached, all the instruments sounded, and the Indians waved their weapons and shouted. The Generals then dismounted and embraced each other, with many compliments and courtesies, after which we all entered the City of Santa Fé de Bogotá, where Diego and I also were received most cordially, although all this shining of the sun after rain we could not understand until we came into private audience with the General.

The day had not turned into night ere he sent for us. We found him pacing up and down in a perturbed fashion, and gnawing at his wiry black beard with his strong white teeth: nevertheless, he received us affably, although with some considerable show of emotion.

"Methinks I owe——" he murmured,—then changed the intent of his speech, and said, somewhat fiercely, "So that *canalla* Manrique hath gone to his place?"

"Your Excellency, he hath passed beyond human justice in a most terrible fashion," Diego replied, as impressively as he could.

"Ay, 'tis true. God pity him!" replied the General, more calmly. "He hath done ye grievous wrong."

"Not so much to me as to my friend, Don Diego de Alarcón," I answered, but Diego interposed.

"May it please your Excellency to examine these papers," he said, laying the fateful packet on the table.

The General gave a glance toward them, but waved them aside, smiling sagely, and said:

"Time for that later. At present I am weighed down with grave cares. I called ye here to do ye justice. Yet can I not enter frankly into all the causes which moved me to distrust the loyal and approve the disloyal. Suffice it to say that such letters came with that double-dealing rogue as compelled me to give credit to his word rather than to mine own eyes. Ye know the ancient saw, 'Acquire a reputation,—then do as you please!' It hath worked well in this case.

"Some of these papers that lie here have already passed through my hands with the purpose of discrediting the very claims they should assert; but they were juggled and abused by skilful hands. Piled upon original doubts as to thy loyalty, Don Diego, came grave doubts as to thy companion's loyalty when he made as if to draw upon me here in this

City, and thou wilt remember, Don Gonzálo, that our first acquaintance was made through a cloud: then the flight of both, and, withal, there was something of reason on my side. One cannot rule the world from the moon. Nevertheless, I am come to myself;" and he smiled wanly and held out both his hands, which we clasped eagerly. "I need friends, and loyal ones at that! Can ye so easily forget what ye have suffered?" He drew us toward him and embraced first one and then the other.

"A word in secret," he added; "the arch-plotter, when free at last of his cherished enemies, made bold to aspire to the chief command. 'Twas then that I knew him at last, but to escape the blow that was to fall, he fled, and thought to ease his bitterness of defeat by wiping out the last score on the grudge he bore ye. But a dire and awful providence hath stepped in his path. After he was gone, many things came to my remembrance, and I saw with unclouded eyes. But he is gone to his reward. I cannot reach him, and now farewell for the moment. I must give audience to Fedreman." Again he pressed our hands and, with rare condescension, showed us to the door.

We were glad enough to be free and out from under the cloud that had so long hovered over us and dampened our every prospect. I may as well say, however, what we afterwards learned, that the long hand of Don Alonzo had reached to the New Kingdom of Granada through this worthy and unworthy agent. This the General knew when he gave us audience, but he said nothing of it to us.

Upon leaving the General's quarters, for the first time we learned that there had come news from his

brothers from the Valley of the Neiva, that an army from Peru, under Belalcázar, approached and would arrive at Bogotá shortly. Here were complications enough to occupy the mind of Quesada!

Who could define the limits of sovereignty between the great Provinces of Santa Marta, Venezuela, and Peru, and would they fall to fighting amongst themselves?

Here was seen the genius of our commander, who won over Captain Fedreman with gracious words and promises and, having by a public writing secured his consent to the giving of the supreme command to himself, afterwards informed him of the approach of the Peruvians and combined with him for their reception. Fedreman's soldiers were to share in the partition of the lands with the rest of us, although they had had no part with us in the conquest.

A few days, therefore, after the arrival of Fedreman, the troops of Belalcázar were seen approaching and, in all the glory of silks, satins, and velvets, plumes and ribbons and laces, the little army filed out upon the plain before the City, and were received with all possible courtesy and respect by the other Captains. Here again was seen the genius of our General; for, instead of quarrelling, there was only peace and friendship, and hence the proverb was rendered of no account which saith that if two sparrows on an ear of wheat will quarrel, what will three do? Perhaps, also, the rivals were willing that Quesada should have the orchard if they could be his neighbours.

If our men of Santa Marta were ashamed at sight of the gorgeous apparel of the Peruvians, we took

comfort at sight of the Venezuelans, for one is never so poor that there is not a poorer, as the ruined heir found when he spent his last *cuartillo* for a handful of beans, and, throwing the husks upon the ground as he ate, saw one coming after him and devouring the husks which he gathered from the ground. That the Venezuelans should not remain ashamed, however, we soon had them clothed with decent garments of the Indian cloth.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BLOOD OF DE LUGO

THE founding of the City was an event worthy of notice, and I must not pass it by. It seemed wise to repeat, with new formalities, a ceremony that had already taken place. On the wide and beautiful plain, dotted with the habitations of the Indians, and lined across in all directions with the broad highways which they had built, four armies were drawn up in martial array.

Upon the eastern side of the City, and upon higher ground than the others, clothed in steel and in cotton cloths of the Indians, our little band, under the Licentiate Quesada, *one hundred and sixty men with one priest and a friar*, looked grimly and proudly down upon the plain. Towards the south, Belalcázar, richly dressed, reined his curvetting charger before his gaily-attired company, consisting of *one hundred and sixty men, one priest and one friar*. On the north the adventurer Fedreman, with followers clothed in the skins of wild beasts and such clothing as we had loaned them, *one hundred and sixty men, one priest and one friar*, were gathered, as if by some numerical freak of fate; whilst facing us on the west were our allies, a thousand Indians in their rich costumes, jewels, and feathered headgear, and armed with their native weapons.

As the wind blew from the páramo, the feathers waved before it like a field of ripening wheat; the

Spanish trumpets blew; the three companies advanced with equal step to the centre of the plaza, bearing the great banners with the lions of Castile.

As the armies passed in review, the three priests and three friars advanced, and, after them, the three Generals. Quesada was of the Andalusian type, black eyes, thick beard, and sharp nose. He rode with masterful dexterity the pick of our remaining steeds. Upon the Toledan blade that hung at his side were these words, legacy of the Cid:

"No me saques sin razón,
Ni me envaines sin honor."

From his shoulders hung a spotless mantle, taken from the Zipa, and fastened with a brooch of gold and emeralds.

Behind him came Belalcázar upon a superb chestnut charger. This soldier was stout and fair, and he wore a wide Spanish hat and clothes of black velvet and gold lace, with boots and velvet gloves.

Last of all came Fedreman, upon mine own war horse, which I had loaned him for the occasion, because he himself was ill-provided. The German was blond of hair and beard, with eyes as blue as mine own. A burnished steel helmet protected his head; a jaguar's skin covered his shoulders, and his long heavy sword clashed against his great iron spurs and broad stirrups.

Finally, our General moved to his position in the centre and, in the name of the Emperor, took possession of the New Kingdom. Drawing his sword and waving it on high, he cried his claim in a loud voice, and challenged to mortal combat whoever might gainsay it. Again the trumpets sounded, all the native

instruments struck up, and a mighty shout arose from the assembled hosts, while all the Spanish soldiers drew their swords and the arquebuziers fired their pieces. A thousand arrows flew into the air and hovered over our heads, falling at last far beyond us.

At the conclusion of this ceremony, Mass was said in the new Cathedral, and, after it was over, Quesada gave the name of the New Kingdom of Granada to the territory which we had conquered, and the City he called Santa Fé de Bogotá, as before.

Fedreman and Belalcázar had arrived in February of the year 1539 and the refounding of the City took place in April of the same year. The spoil was divided and redivided. My portion went into the ground with that which had been already hidden away, likewise Diego's with it.

The three Generals made ready to return to Spain to ask for royal favours, and finally departed by Guataquí and the Great River to Cartagena, where they melted the gold trinkets into ingots and took them to Madrid.

We of the City were busy in many matters. Diego and I and our comrades had now a comfortable house made for us in the New City, and here we had our rendezvous and bachelor quarters.

Now, at last, I bethought me more often of Beatriz and planned to go to her as soon as I could get the matter of the Encomienda which was due me, settled, that I might have a landed estate suitable for an heiress.

The matter dragged in adjustment, however, and thus the days went by. Before the Generals left us we were joined by many adventurers from the Coast, who brought us news of the death of Don Pedro

de Lugo, the Governor, for which I was grieved at heart; and now, as time went by, we got news of his successor, Jerónimo Lebrón, who set out to come to Bogotá with an expedition ere the Generals could return from Spain and dispute his rights.

Of his terrible sufferings I cannot write, nor how he came at last to the City of Vélez and met Fernán Pérez de Quesada in Tunja, where they arranged a treaty of peace, Lebrón finally abandoning his purpose and returning to Santa Marta.

One day in January we all sat at meat, about eleven hours of the morning, when we heard a great noise and commotion in the street, with trampling of horses and barking of dogs.

"Pedro, amigo, thou art nighest to the door. Pull thy legs out from under the table, if thou canst, and see what expedition is returned," I said to Molina, for Diego was away upon a foray toward the Great River and the town of Honda, and we might well expect him back at any moment.

"If Don Diego is before the door he will soon be on this side of it," replied Molina, lazily, and stirred not a step.

Seeing that he would not go, and being anxious for a sight of Diego, I stepped to the door and recognised in an instant some unusual excitement in the street. Looking up toward the north, I saw a company of soldiers and adventurers making its way towards me as fast as the press of the multitude would let it, and immediately saw what was causing the disturbance.

"Thou lazy beast!" I cried, thrusting my head back into the door,—“cow, pig, ass of the fifth essence! Come pay thy devoirs at the shrine of beauty!

Farthingales, man! Farthingales,—as I'm alive and a devout Christian. Válgame Dios! What a sight for sore eyes!"

I had not finished half my speech before Juan de Dios and Molina were by my side, and I turned again to satisfy my curiosity with a sight of the ladies, for there they were, sure enough, and I had commenced to count them when, with a glad cry, two soft arms went around my neck and the Indian maid, Olahla, whom we had long given up as lost or dead, fell upon my breast in a swoon of joy.

This was happiness enough for all our little party, without caring for a sight of the women-folk of our own blood and race, for we all loved the loyal maiden well, so I gathered her up in mine arms, without thought of the Spanish ladies, and bore her to the house, to the care of the woman who served us there.

When I came back to our common room they told me that there were five of them, and a baby which had been born since the party left Santa Marta, and that they had all come with Lebrón to Vélez, and thence to Santa Fé de Bogotá.

Ere they had finished telling me of the Spanish women, Olahla came in from the rear on her own two feet, and fell to laughing and sobbing at the sight of us all.

"How is this, girl?" I cried, holding her before me by both her hands to look at her and note the changes in her. "Thou hast been separated from thy loyal knights and servants here,—who kiss thy feet,—lo now these three years and more, and thou comest back to us speaking our own Castillian tongue with infinitely greater ease and fluency, although not

with greater grace, for thy first uncouth attempts were gracious beyond measure."

She laughed and cocked her head at me sidewise with an air of mystery, in the dear familiar fashion of old.

"Ah, Don Gonzálo not know that the Lady of Guatavita come forth from the Lake to teach Olahla?"

"Fiddlesticks! What doth the Lady of the Lake know of the Castillian?" I enquired, in mock anger, and added to tease her, "or thou of her?"

She drew her hands from mine and pretended to purse up her pretty lips in displeasure, and then I recalled how angry she was with Diego because he would not credit her story of the Lake when we were at Guatavita. At last she relented and told us the truth.

"Ah, Don Gonzálo,—Olahla no can fool him. The words go away from Olahla very fast and she very sorry, until byme-by come Governor Lebrón's people, find Olahla in the forest. There one lady, Doña Maria Díaz, most gracious lady,—talk to Olahla all the day. Much astonish because Olahla know some Spanish. Olahla tell her of Don Gonzálo and how he save her from enemies and all how suffer together. Doña Maria know all about Don Gonzálo, now. Very much interest—too much interest," with a little sigh. Then she laughed and went on:

"Doña Maria talk about Yellow Hair all time. Talk, talk, talk! Make Olahla very tired," and she counterfeited fatigue of the mind in a masterly fashion. "Olahla think, what for no talk of something

else? No, no,—Olahla must talk, talk, talk. Tell all about how Yellow Hair fight,—tell everything. Tell all about Great River, all about Jeque at Guatavita, all about things which Olahla no interest,” and the rogue sighed again.

I made pretence of being angry, drew my sword, and chased her screaming in mock terror from the room, to rest herself from her journey, for I knew she must be weary. I bade the woman give her food and let her repose, and we would hear her story later.

Meanwhile, I set out upon the street to have a glance, if I might, at the Spanish women; but the Cabildo had provided for their entertainment, and they were all within doors, resting after their journey. When I returned to our place I found Diego there, just returned from Honda, and overjoyed with the news of Olahla's return.

When night was come and we had dined and were chatting about the great table of the sala, the girl came out, blinking and rubbing her eyes, and we made her a place at the board, and had them bring her such food as there was and set it before her, and then, when she had finished eating, we heard her story.

By this time I had noticed, however, how much she was changed. Merry and bright as ever, she was yet on the whole more staid and womanly, and had grown stronger and even better-looking.

“Tell us who the old man of the blue toad was, Olahla,” I said, and with that she began the tale in her own fashion, but, as she took long to tell it, with little laughs and sly allusions in her droll way, not to take up too much time, I shall tell it in mine own

words, for it is worthy not to remain in the ink bottle.

By custom and law of the Indians, as ancient as the hierarchy with which the girl was by blood connected, the office of priest, like that of the cacique, instead of following our European course and descending from father to son, went down by sisters' children. Those of the line sacerdotal, of the family of the pontifex maximus, were tattooed in childhood with the figure of the sacred frog, and this was done by means of a mysterious pigment, the secret of whose manufacture remained jealously guarded in the family, and by means of which a peculiar colour was obtained which could not be counterfeited. Further than this, any counterfeiting of the sign was punishable by death, and the loyalty of the people was so great that no attempt had ever been made to commit such a fraud.

The old man was related to Olahla in the following manner. As High-priest, the office would pass to the sister's son, but the only sister's son had died, leaving a sister, Olahla's mother, through whom the heritage passed to Olahla's brother, who had died in his youth, leaving Olahla as his only sister and the only hope of the family, in that she might some day become the mother of the High-priest who should succeed the old man that we had seen, who was, consequently, Olahla's grand-uncle. Hence the reverence and obedience paid to Olahla by the Jeque at Bogotá, and hence the stay of our execution at Guatavita. Now became evident, also, the reason why Olahla had not revealed herself to the jeques at Guachetá, for she feared separation from us should her rank become known; and only at the last and

critical moment was she finally revealed, and that by an accident. When she reached this point in her story I noticed that she became somewhat confused and embarrassed, and I have always suspected that she meant to have the three of us perish together rather than be separated from us; but I respected her devotion, and did not urge her to an explanation.

When her identity was discovered and established, and she had told her uncle how she had been kidnapped and sold into captivity by a war-party from a tribe which came from the far north; how we had rescued her and cared for her; and how she was now fled with us from the camp of the Spaniards, she demanded our release and a guide and safe-conduct to Santa Marta, knowing that her own case was helpless, and that she must marry and bear an heir to the sacred office.

The old man readily promised her what she desired, but either deceived her or was himself deceived by the subordinate jeques, or, perhaps, to do him full justice, was intending to carry out his promise later, until our flight from Tunja put all his fat in the fire.

However this may have been, we were hurried away, and the girl was given a term in which to select a suitor. He whom she finally selected, however, died of some distemper ere the marriage was consummated, and her second choice was slain at Sogomoso by our people.

From the burning temple where we saw her, she escaped by a miracle and was kept in hiding for a time; then the illness of the High-priest delayed the girl's marriage to a third aspirant for her hand; and,

finally, an attack by one of our expeditions drove them from their place of refuge, and number three was slain at the same time. A fourth was hard to find amongst the growing scarcity of eligible princes, so that many months went by before the matter was arranged again, and then the old man fell sick, this time mortally, and after many weeks of fever, passed away. Concealing the fact of his death, she who had so faithfully nursed him, fled, and by chance came upon Lebrón's party, which led her to Bogotá, but could give her no news of us.

Diego hung upon her lips as she talked, and when she was done I turned to him.

"Now give account of thyself, vagrant! Where hast thou been, and what hast thou done?"

"I have been beyond the Great River, as thou knowest, and I have seen the lands, our Encomiendas. When I set eyes upon those rich regions of the Gualí, I made bold to claim them for thee and the rest as our portion, and the Cabildo hath allowed the claim."

"Then our waiting time is over?" I asked, with fervour, for it was weary waiting. "What thou hast chosen will satisfy me, but I cannot speak for friends Juan and Pedro."

"Yes, our waiting time is over, and we are free to found our colony if Juan and Pedro are satisfied with my choice," he answered. "What say ye, old men,—will ye go by a young man's choice?"

"Ay!" they both replied, with eagerness, for it had been so understood before he left.

"Then we may get together a party when we like, and make a settlement."

We were all overjoyed at the news, after the long delay, and because the lands were all together, so

that one settlement might serve all of us for the present.

So, when we had whipped this topic into rags, we separated for the night; but Diego went with me to my quarters, and sat him down on a stool with earnest and thoughtful expression. At this I knew that he had not freed himself of all that was upon his mind, but I was weary of sitting about doing nothing and, besides, was half asleep, so I yawned and yawned again, and pulled my shirt up over mine ears, and made him generally as unwelcome as I could.

When I had got rid of my shirt, I sat upon the edge of my bunk in my shirt of mail and deerskin breeches, and gazed at him sleepily as he fidgeted about on the stool. At last I yawned again in his face and started to pull off my breeches, but he could stand it no longer.

"Come, Gonzálo!" he said, "wilt thou fling me bodily through the door and slam it after me, or wilt thou hear what I have to say, and not snore whilst I am a-saying it? Where hast thou left thy manners, man, that thou canst not bear with a friend?"

At this I laughed and bade him hunt his own, and not come bothering his friends at such an hour with what could well wait until morning; for I had long seen how it was with Diego; how he had loyally kept his feelings hid away when he thought that I might have a personal interest; how he had watched over and jealously guarded the girl, and how he had mourned for her when she was gone; but I thought that if he had waited so long, he might well wait whilst I slept, only he would not have it so, and blurted out:

"By the Virgin, Gonzálo, either thrust in thy spoon or pass the dish to me! Give me the girl or take her thyself, but let us come to an understanding, now that we have our lands, and let us dig up our treasure and hire some of these adventurers that are lately arrived, to make a settlement."

"Each madman to his mania," I cried,—“hunt the priest to-morrow, an thou wilt, but give me peace,” and I went on pulling off my hose and breeches. “But she must say ‘ay’ of her own free will. Thou shalt not have her else.”

“Thinkest thou that I would force her?” he exclaimed, with a flash of indignation. Then he looked dejected, and dropped back upon the stool from which he had risen.

“There’s the rub, Gonzálo. I fear the girl is bewitched by grey eyes and yellow curls, and will reject the black.”

At this I came to my senses. “The Saints spare me from aught of blame in that! Thou knowest full well that I have ever given her a brother’s heart, and a brother’s tenderness, and nothing more.”

“Ay,—that is the truth; but thou canst not stay the course of nature by thy willing. Let it be as she saith,” and the good fellow arose and made off, with anything but a cheerful face, whilst I mused but little on his troubles, and dropped off sound as a log in a moment. We can ever play the philosopher with another’s troubles, but if Diego slept not that night, I was not to sleep the next, for my sins.

The morning was well advanced, and the house was empty of all of us save myself and the women, who were busy about their household duties in another part of the place. I was thinking of Diego’s

plan for making a settlement upon our lands, and of my buried treasure, and so my thoughts went easily and swiftly to the snug sum which I had with the bankers at Málaga, and then to Beatriz.

Time and distance augment great passions and diminish little ones, just as the wind extinguishes a candle but fans a more vigorous flame into hotter life and strength.

Through all the toils, privations, and fightings of the busy years which had flown by since we left the Port of San Lúcar, and came to Santa Marta and the New Kingdom of Granada, often had I wondered what fortune had befallen her, and often had I grown sick with doubt and dread at the possibilities of evil and danger that might lie in her path. Busy hours are least filled with longings and fruitless surmises and, save the days I had lain in prison, or was a captive of the Indians, I had had but little time to give to memories and imaginings.

Now, however, that I had more time on my hands, waiting for the Cabildo to act, I had formed the habit of giving many an idle hour to day-dreams, and thus it was at the moment of which I write. Should I go with Diego and set things upon their feet ere I returned to Spain, or should I drop down to Santa Marta with the next post, and make the quickest possible passage to the Old World and to all that it might have for me, and then return to mine estate when I had found and won Beatriz? What if I could not claim her? What if she were another's? Idle imaginings, which none could answer! There came a sound of voices and a sword-hilt upon the door. Before the threshold stood an officer of the Cabildo and a veiled lady.

"Don Gonzálo,—by y'r leave. Doña Maria Díaz, with a letter for your Worship." With this the officer bowed, and the lady courtesied, but spoke no word.

I bade her enter and the officer as well, but she dismissed him with an imperious wave of the hand, so slight, however, that it was half seen, half divined. Bowing again, the man turned away, and the lady entered our common living-room, and there I made haste to provide her with the most commodious seat our clumsy house-keeping could afford. Upon this she seated herself with a bow of acknowledgment, and spoke, as if in half apology for the condescension: "As our conference may be somewhat lengthy, I would be at ease."

At the sound of her voice I started and sprang toward her, but she put me back with a gesture, and extended to me a packet at the same time.

"Don Gonzálo de Lugo,—worthy cousin mine,—I see that I am not forgotten, and am pleased to know that it is so. You will wonder why and how I am here, but not more than I myself wonder, who willed to journey hither. I left Spain soon after your departure, and came to Santa Marta to be under the protection of mine uncle, whom I found sick and dying. Upon my journey I passed Don Alonzo, who was returning with his ill-gotten wealth to the Court, but the vessels held divergent courses and spoke each other not.

"To my mingled grief and happiness, the Blessed Virgin gave me the high and holy privilege of cheering Don Pedro's dying hours, and closing his sightless eyes; but, ere he died, he told me much, and gave me this letter for you. Pray possess yourself of the

contents, and you will know why I claim relationship with you." For she had silenced me with a motion of the hand as I was about to interrupt her at the word "cousin," and now she paused and waited for me to read the letter.

I was so dazed and dumbfounded to sit there staring at the veil which covered the face which I had loved so well and had longed to look upon for now so many weary years, and to hear the well-beloved voice calling me by a strange name, and adding the title "cousin" to it, that I could neither read nor speak, but sat with my jaw fallen like a man bereft of his senses. What meant this masquerade of Beatriz de la Torre under the name of Maria Díaz? How she had reached Bogotá I could more easily understand. Gonzálo de Lugo! Never had I thought to bear the name of de Lugo.

Then I bethought me at last of the letter from Don Pedro, and remembered that he had promised it to me ere I left him for the last time. Faithful old man,—true as steel in all things! I broke the seal and, in compliance with Doña Beatriz' request, read the letter:

"To DON GONZÁLO DE LUGO, called de Cabrera:

"My dearly beloved son: Thou wilt wonder at this address, and at many things herein contained. I must be brief, as my strength is waning fast, and my mind wanders when the fever is upon me. Think not, however, that this revelation that I make thee is but the vapouring of an unbalanced mind! Thou art mine eldest son,—mine only son with right to the title. The proofs I send thee with this letter. Ah, unhappy man that I am, to have used thee and thy poor mother so ill!

"Thy mother was the daughter of an Englishman of rank, in the suite of the Ambassador. I married her secretly, but in due and proper form, as thou wilt see by the papers I send thee. Why she loved me, the stern warrior, rather than the gentle scholar who cherished thee in thine infancy and boyhood, I know not; and yet I know now that she did not love that

other one, although there was a time when I thought that it was so. I was oft away to the wars. A false friend sowed doubts in my mind. No one had known of our marriage save the priest, and he was dead. Her people had disowned her because of me, for they were heretics, and, besides, knew not that we were properly wedded. There came a time when I must own the marriage or wed another. To own my marriage with a heretic meant mine own disinherittance. I thought her false. I was deceived. Forgive me, if thou canst, for I took the marriage vows upon me again and, putting my bride in her place in my household, broke thy mother's heart, and sinned against God and thyself. Thou wast born that same month, and thy mother died, leaving thee a legacy to the Dean, who faithfully fulfilled the trust. Alonzo was born a year later and has lived as the heir, but has at last visited my sin upon me in mine old age by robbery and desertion. I have now no son but thyself, and I know thee to be mine, both because I see now in mine old age that thy mother could not do me a wrong, and because the false friend hath some time since sent me a dying word by a faithful priest who shrived him.

"I cannot make amends to thee, but I leave thee such evidence as will put thee in thy rights, and this will justly punish him whom I once put in thy place, and me, with a tarnished memory.

"Yet one thing I would do for thee. Beatriz shall not be his. I send her to thee with this letter. I know thy loyal heart, and that thou canst forgive. Pardon! Pray for the peace of my soul! I have ever loved thee.

"Thy father,

"PEDRO FERNÁNDEZ DE LUGO."

Mine eyes filled with tears as I read, and I could not feel the bitterness that I might have felt had not I loved the old man in spite of all his faults. For a moment I forgot Beatriz, and mused on what the future meant for me now. I turned the papers over and over and saw that all was complete and that there lacked no legal form for my case. Yet could I plunge the old man's memory in shame to claim a name I had never borne? Beatriz read my thoughts as I came to a resolve.

"Thank you," she said, and rose to her feet. "Gonzálo de Cabrera, I bid you farewell. May you live and be as happy as you deserve," and, ere I could

detain her, she had slipped through the door and was gone.

Bewildered and astonished, I seized my cap and followed after her, but she was nowhere to be seen. As though the earth had opened and swallowed her, there remained not a token of her presence, save the packet of papers that lay upon the table where I had but just now flung them.

Like a madman I rushed down the street and came to the meeting place of the Cabildo, where I sought news of her.

"Doña Beatriz de la Torre? None such has come to the City," was the reply to my questioning.

Then I remembered that she had come under another name than her own, but I could not call it to mind, so I sought the messenger that had brought her to my house, and found that the name had been given as Doña Maria Díaz, and that she had come all the way from Santa Marta in company with Doña Leonor Gómez, purporting to be her husband's niece, and I understood at once that she had done this in order to have protection and to avoid notoriety.

Having sought out this Leonor Gómez at the lodging which had been provided by the Cabildo, I found that Doña Beatriz had not yet returned, and, accordingly, I made my way back again to my quarters, and there I had my hands so immediately filled with other matters that I must needs let my quest be for the time: for, when I reached the house and came to the common room, there were Diego and Olahla, and I could see at a glance that there had been an explanation of some sort between them.

Diego sat in the great chair which had held Beatriz but an hour before, his chin on his open palm,

and his elbow on the arm of the chair. His black locks were pulled loosely over his forehead and his legs spread out with heels thrust into the dirt floor, a picture of dejection, so that I well-nigh forgot mine own troubles and laughed aloud, but the look on Olahla's face checked me.

With the hunted fawn in her great eyes, she glanced from him to me and back again: such a look I never want to see again in woman's eyes: then she flung herself upon a bench with a great cry, and her shoulders shook, as her young body was torn with pain and woe.

With one stride I stood over her, and rested my hand gently upon her shoulder: "Oh, Olahla girl, what is this?" I cried. "Mother of Mercy, what have we done to thee? What is it, Diego? What is it, girl?"

Suddenly the maiden grew still; her sobs ceased; and, presently she got upon her feet with the look still upon her face, but now it was cold and resolute.

"Don Diego," she bravely said, and held out her hand to him, "Olahla is ready. Too much joy: too much pride for Olahla at first. Now Olahla very glad. Will go to priest: go anywhere: be good wife always." With this she smiled,—such a smile!

Mingled satisfaction and doubt chased each other across Diego's face, but selfish man is little inclined to cavil when fortune runs with his wishes, so he was for making off to the priest at once, but I would not have it so, and insisted that she be given a quiet wedding with our intimates and best friends, as soon as they could be called together; but the word got about, and, that afternoon, there was a very great concourse present, for both bridegroom and bride

were well known and liked, and the gifts were many and valuable, although there was, of necessity, but little variety.

I gave away the bride myself, and presented her with an excellent young horse, which I bought for her, that she might ride with her husband to his estate. Pedro gave her a bracelet of gold and some fine mantles. In jest I bade him seek a comely Indian woman for himself, to preside over his own domicile when we should go to our lands, but he shook his head with grave disdain.

"Nay, nay!" he said, "the prize hath fallen to our comrade, and 'twould not be well to tempt Fate."

"There are lots of good fish in the sea, amigo," I rejoined.

Again he shook his head. "Who marries, marries; but, as for me, matrimony I take it," quoth he, "is like unto a sack which containeth ninety and nine vipers and an eel. Thrust in thy hand, and thou canst safely wager ninety and nine to one that thou wilt not get the eel."

I laughed at his pessimism and let him be. Doubtless he knew whereof he spoke.

All were merry at the feast, save the bride; yet, though she did what she could, I liked not her looks nor the smile which she wore, but knew no way to give her aught else save Diego, a good and true man, and such an one as any maid might long for and not be ashamed.

When the maid had been baptised, the good padre joined them in marriage, and it was not until then that I noticed that all the women who had come from Santa Marta were present save Beatriz. When I enquired, I found that she had left that same day

for Santa Marta with the post that went down to the Great River, and Juan de Dios went with her as her squire.

At this news I was more amazed than before, and grieved as well, at the defection of the armourer, for I could make naught of her disappearance, until I learned from Olahla that when she had left me in the morning she had turned at the corner of the house and come upon Olahla, with whom she had remained for half an hour talking and taking leave of her, and had then gone to the Cabildo, and, learning of the departure of an extra post, had arranged to go down the river to Santa Marta.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PURSUIT

WHEN I had become cognisant of these facts in connection with the disappearance of Doña Beatriz, I knew not whether to remain behind or to pursue, but, at last, put pride in pocket and mounted my horse to follow after. However, the post rode in haste, and Beatriz by this time must have become hardened to the road, for I came across the Sabána to Facativá, by hard riding on my best nag, too late to overtake them; but I had word of them and learned that they had baited their cattle there some two or three hours before, so I pushed on into the pass of the mountains as fast as my horse could carry me, knowing that he must needs take his time to it when he came to the descent of the mountains.

It is twelve good leagues or thereabouts to Aguallarga, where the Cordillera begins to fall away toward the Great River, but, beyond Aguallarga there is still much going up as well as going down ere one come to it, and all this is over a road made for goats, because the savages, not having beasts of burden, were satisfied with less than a bridle-path.

As the pass opened out toward the descent, the sun was fast falling into the western hills, and a blaze of light upon the bottom of the valley shone upon the armour and accoutrements of a little company picking its way along the Camino Real: a moment more and they were in shadow, and I in a blaze of

light, where, I doubt not, they could have seen me against the dark verdure of the hills, had they looked back, although two leagues lay between us; for I stood upon the edge of the world, and the air is marvellously clear in these latitudes or altitudes, and the soldier's eye is keen.

Shaking his powerful neck and inflating his nostrils with the fresh air of the evening, the charger gazed across the valley, and, as though he too saw and divined, made the echoes answer with his lonely and almost human cry.

I plunged impatiently down the slope into the gathering darkness, trusting to his instinct for the path, and to my fortune not to fall amongst the Indians. Slipping, sliding, and stumbling, we made our way down the mountain side until, of a sudden, the horse stopped abruptly, snorting as if in terror, and I must needs slip to the ground and see what was to be seen.

Flinging myself from the saddle, I struck the ground, as it seemed, many varas below my beast, and with such a shock withal that I came near driving my teeth up into my skull. Flint and steel and tinder I had with me and straightway struck a light, and with a bunch of dried leaves illumined the spot and saw to what a pass I was come.

My horse stood above me, sniffing and snorting, upon a shelf or ledge of rock which was so narrow, in fact, that in vaulting from the saddle I had gone clear of it and struck against a second ledge below, on which I was now standing, thanks to the fact that I had come down with my feet inclined outwards, rather than my head, else this tale had not been written.

With infinite pains I scrambled up to where Erebus stood, but I scarce could see him, for he was black as night itself, though, for that matter, in such a night all cats are black, and horses too, I ween.

There was no turning the creature about, and no advancing. Wrapping my cloak about me, for the night was rarely chill, I stretched myself as well as I could at the animal's feet, and there I lay till morning revealed to me all the splendid peril of my position.

A thousand varas of dizzy abyss lay beneath me: two hundred stretched vertically above me: in front, a great green ocean of heaving billows of hill and vale stretched before me to the next great Sierra: below me, the road went winding down like a brown thread of embroidery upon a green farthingale, until it was lost in the lower recesses of the valley.

I backed my docile Erebus some hundred varas to a place where the ledge was a bit wider and there I turned him about and went on to the parting of the ways where we had lost our course the night before. Breakfasting upon a bit of dried venison and bread that I had with me, whilst the horse cropped the tender grass, which, with the little he had found within reach of his velvety lips during the night, must serve him until we came to the post-station at Villeta, I drank from an icy spring by the wayside and sprang once more to the saddle.

No use to make haste now! It was a step at a time and a long time, too. At Villeta I stopped to bait my horse, and there I learned that the party I was pursuing had spent the night at the station and were on the road at daybreak, a good six hours in advance of me.

As night fell, I had crossed the last Sierra and was come in sight of the Great River, whose muddy waters in the dying sun, like a great riband of gold, wound their way for leagues on leagues through the broad green valley northwards toward the sea.

Fifty leagues and more toward the west, the snow-clad peaks of Tolima thrust their glittering summits into the glory of the evening, mocking the heated vapours of the plain. A thousand brilliant brushes painted the heavens from horizon to horizon, a dome frescoed by no mortal hand. Below me lay Honda and—Beatriz! A wearied steed demanded food and rest.

Flinging myself from the saddle, I built a fire and, drawing my cloak about me for protection from the wind of the páramo, I let my good horse help himself to the abundant pasturage, whilst I munched the dry ration with which I had provided myself at Villeta.

When the sun had marked half its course to the zenith on the following day, I drew rein upon the brink of the Magdalena. The station, or block-house, of Honda lay about half a league farther down the river, and on the other side of the stream, but the rapids opposite the place precluded all idea of crossing without a canoe.

As I looked toward the farther bank, of a sudden there came a sound of musketry from the direction of the fort, and, at the same moment, the ferryman came running toward his canoe and, leaping into it, paddled hastily in my direction.

“’Tis an ill wind,” quoth I to myself, “that blows no one good, and here is the canoe coming, although

I suspect that other motives impel it than the ferryman's zeal to serve me."

And so it proved, for when he came to the place where I stood, he let me know that he had had a warning of an attack from the Gualí Indians, who had some occasion of discontent with the Encomenderos. However, I bade him ferry me over, which he would not do, and pushing his bark off from the land, sustained it with his pole, whilst he answered mine arguments with indifference which was half insolence, but for this he paid with a morning's bath, for I touched Erebus with the spur and lifted him with the rein, so that horse and rider struck the water not far from the crazy rolling craft, made from a hollow log, and with a couple of plunges I swam to him and, putting my hand on the canoe, turned it bottom upwards and its owner into the stream, whence he had some labour to escape with his life and his means of livelihood, ere he and the canoe went into the swifter water above the rapids.

By the dancing trees and the way the banks fled past me, I soon saw that I had reckoned without my host in attempting to cross the stream, and was minded to turn back, for the river runs some three hundred varas wide and the current is like a mill-race; but my good horse had already brought me well out into the stream and it was ten to go forward and a half-score to return. As no man of valour likes to go back except when common-sense is very evidently the better part of courage, I turned Erebus a bit more up the stream and urged the gallant animal on as best I could, although I but little needed to do so, for the intelligent creature seemed to recognise our peril and bend every energy to make the oppo-

site shore, ere we came into the whirling cauldron of the rapids.

The fort was now come into view, with the horde of Indians who had laid siege to it, and the attention of all was soon centred upon the struggle in the water. The savages crowded down upon the shore, and I thought to die at their hands should I succeed in reaching it, so I turned my head toward the breaking of the angry brown waves upon the rocks, and, for the instant, drew on the rein that would turn Erebus' head toward them; but I thought of the fate which the Church teaches must be his who voluntarily gives himself over to death, and stayed my hand.

A moment later Erebus found a foothold at the edge of the cataract, and a shout arose from those inside the fort, and from those outside as well, their barbaric antagonists. In this latter cry I read my doom, for I was protected only by the shirt of mail which Juan de Dios gave me, but I drew my good sword for the last time, and gathered myself firmly in the stirrups, as my noble horse staggered to the shore. Giving him a moment to breathe, I plunged the spurs into his flanks and dashed forward into a wide lane of savage warriors which opened in front of me and closed after me without a hand raised against me, and thus I rode into the fort and flung myself wet and weary upon the earth.

"The post!" I cried,— "the post! What of the post?"

"It left the Embarcadero an hour before the attack," was the answer.

Dry clothes and a draught of wine brought me to myself, and I took my place at the ramparts

with the rest. Later in the day a well-ordered sortie broke the siege and led to a fitting punishment of our enemies, but I care not to write of that.

The business over, I returned to Bogotá, as there was no hope of overtaking the post upon the river, nor were there canoes ready for the purpose, because the Indians had taken away all those at the Embarcadero, and destroyed them.

After moping about the City for a time, scarce knowing what to do, I gave in to the earnest and repeated solicitations of Diego, and turned aside with him to our estates, where we laboured to make a proper settlement on them, and soon were as well domiciled as Saint Peter at Rome.

After this I thought to go to Spain and settle mine affairs there, and see what was to be the sequel of my life's romance. Thus the months went by and we had news from time to time by those who came to us from Spain. One day there came knowledge that Don Alonzo was at last married and had become great at Court:—the lady's name was Beatriz. Another came and brought the same word. It seemed now that the mystery was explained. She had sought me out that I might engage to seek no justice against her lover. How well she had judged me, who had known me so long and so little! Justice I could not have against the husband of Beatriz de la Torre. Ah, well, that dream was over! I was a soldier and I would suffer in silence.

Diego and Olahla saw that I was stricken and did all that they could to cheer me. As for Olahla herself, I rejoiced that the brave spirit was grown somewhat contented, and her merry laugh rang as

of old about the place. A babe hung at her breast, and he was King, and she was Queen in the house. Diego and I and the rest were slaves.

Now at last I could go to Spain and settle mine affairs. I might as well be there as here; and what profited it to throw away my good gold, which might do for the young Alarcóns, for I thought never to marry.

One day I drifted down the river, with gold enough for my passage and for my comfort on the way, and I came to Barranca Bermeja, where we had suffered and triumphed over our privations: thence to Sompallón, and finally to Santa Marta, where I stood for a spell beside the grave of my father, and read upon the stone that lay upon it, this inscription in Latin:

"This narrow slab that lies
Pedro Fernández over,
His straitened fortune hides,
His glory cannot cover.
At most excessive cost
He did great wealth discover,
Yet all the profit by him lost,
Went to enrich another."

Noble old man! Brave, honest, and kindly. I would I had known thee better!

Plunged in vague and vain regret, I turned about and, for the moment, took it as a matter of course that mine old companion in arms should be standing by me, with a tear hanging for a moment from the lashes of his eye ere it dropped on the veteran's bronzed cheek. Then it came upon me in a flash what I had on the books against him, and I looked coldly at him for an instant, and dropped my hand as if by chance upon my sword-hilt.

"You here!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," he briefly replied.

I would not stoop to reproach him, nor yet would I speak of Beatriz and ask news of her. For a moment I thought I could strike him, and then I knew that this also was impossible. I turned on my heel and walked away.

"Gonzálo!"

Although I had not *thoued* him, still the old man called me by my name. I could not but turn by head and pause, in spite of me.

"To whom thinkest thou that I owe my first allegiance: to my friend and comrade, or to the family of my liege lord?" The faithful fellow looked long and earnestly at me.

"Oh, Juan de Dios," I answered, "thou knowest not what thou hast done."

"Is it for the vassal to enquire?" he retorted, stubbornly.

"Juan, thou art right. Where hast thou left her?"

The old man's face lightened, for he loved me as his own son. "I left her with a party of gentle-folk, returning to Spain. 'Tis some months since they sailed, and I have awaited thy coming here, knowing that thou wouldst not tarry."

I took mine old friend to my bosom and we turned back to my father's grave.

"Juan," I said, after a moment's pause, "I am going to confide in thee my greatest treasure, my honour. Knowest thou who lieth here? It is my father."

The good fellow thought that I was a bit inclined to jest on grave matters or else was raving; but I told him all the tale, and swore him to silence.

Head of the family as I now was, he greatly grieved at the course which he had taken, but I bade him be easy on that score, as he could not have known.

When my vessel sailed that day, I left him to turn his steps toward Bogotá, and there await me, whilst I went on my way, and, one day in May, I set foot again in Málaga to claim mine own.

Having provided for the transfer of my money, I set out for Madrid to settle some matters connected with Diego's estate, and hoping also to see the General; but I found that he was in great disfavour at Court, although Belalcázar had received the Government of all the territory between Quito and Popayan, and was already returned to the New World. Quesada himself was in disfavour for a two-fold reason. He had appeared before the Court in the Low Countries to kiss the hand of the Emperor, clad in a suit of fine scarlet cloth, although the Court was in mourning at the time on account of the recent death of the Empress Isabel. This brought him into such bad odour that he had to fly to France, where the Princess Doña Juana in vain tried to have him arrested, both because she was angry on account of the affront, and because she was covetous to lay her hands upon his wealth, which common report credited him with carrying about with him.

Finally, Don Alonzo de Lugo was high in favour at Court, and had set out to persecute him all that he could, for when the King itches all the courtiers scratch themselves. The Licentiate's coming to the Court had also given him a further incentive to meddle in his affairs because information concerning the value of his discoveries got noised about, and so

Don Alonzo laid claim to the Governorship because the expedition had been sent out with money which Don Pedro, his father, had provided. The Great Council of the Indies, therefore, awarded him the prize, and he was preparing to go to Santa Fé de Bogotá when I reached Madrid.

Of all these matters I knew nothing when I reached the City, but they shortly came to mine ears. I know not what led me to seek the house where I had last seen Beatriz when I was in the Capital, but seek it I did, ere I had brushed the dust of travel from my garments. In little did I appear to be a grandee of Spain, possessed of extensive lands and treasure, and owner of the handsome mansion that I had come to see, but not to claim. Striding down the narrow street, I found the pavement blocked with people gathered about a carriage which stood before the house.

Forced to wait, whether I would or no, I saw the handsome face and form of my half-brother emerge from the door. Leaning on his arm was a proud and stately woman, the sight of whom brought my teeth together hard, and a gulp in my throat. She turned her head and looked down haughtily upon the curious throng. What was this? Who hung upon his arm? For it was not a face or figure known to me that I saw!

Nudging the page at whose elbow I stood, I begged to know the names of the pair.

"What!" he exclaimed, with a look of superior wisdom, "knowest thou not the illustrious Don Alonzo de Lugo, Governor of all the Indies, or what is the same, I take it, of the New Kingdom of Granada? Art a stranger here?"

"Ay, lad; a stranger I am. Who then may be the lady at his side?"

"Ave Maria! Who should it be save the lady of the Governor himself, Doña Beatriz de Noroña?"

The boy must have thought me daft at sight of my face, and when I slipped a broad piece of gold in his hand, he must have wondered to see me wandering loose and free from restraint upon the public streets; but I heeded him not and only shouldered my way through the crowd and laid my hand upon Alonzo's sleeve.

The people murmured to see a dingy wayfarer like me make free with a grandee of Spain, but there was something in the set of my figure and the thrust I gave with my great shoulders that bade them mind their own affairs, I take it. Alonzo turned, and as he turned, lost all the colour that had not been given him by his lackey when he made him ready to go upon the street.

"I would have speech with thee," I said, in a low tone.

"I know thee not, fellow," he replied, "so be off about thy business or I shall hand thee over to my knaves to be taught a lesson."

"I fear them not, nor all that thou canst threaten, *brother*," I said, with a sinister emphasis on the word, which cost me somewhat to utter. "I have matters of importance to treat with thee. Deny me at thy peril!"

Alonzo winced at the word and looked anxiously at his wife, who was waiting and wondering in haughty patience at the strange incident. In an instant his decision was made: muttering, "To-night,

at eight of the clock; here," he stepped quickly into the coach, and bade them drive on.

Casting not a glance behind me at the gaping crowd, which fell back to let me pass, I made my way to the inn, and then set about the despatch of certain matters of business ere I went to the interview with Alonzo. Having accomplished these, I opened my boxes and selected the finest I had, and put them on over mine old friend, the shirt of mail which Juan de Dios had given me. With dagger in my belt and a superfine toledo swinging at my side, I finally set forth to meet mine ancient enemy and nearest of kin.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RENUNCIATION

UPON reaching the mansion of the de Lugos, the door opened almost before I had had time to knock, and a well-trained servant conducted me to a small study or cabinet, where I found my brother waiting for me. Bowing ceremoniously, each to the other, he bade me be seated and come to my business as shortly as possible, for time was pressing him, because he was on the eve of his departure for the New World.

"I am charmed to gratify one so near of kin, and to whom I owe so many courtesies as thyself," I replied,—at which he frowned and waved his hand deprecatingly.

"'Twould be idle for me to say that I know naught of this matter," he said, gravely, "for my father, whom may the Saints comfort, wrote me of the grievous wrong that he had done thee as well as myself. I fancy that the news was brought to me in the hope that I might be suitably chastened by it. Yet he did me a further grievous wrong, thus to misjudge me, for I am disposed to admit thy claim, and, that the matter may be brought on its way as speedily as possible, ere I leave the Court, my man-of-law shall pass upon thy papers and set them before the judges, that there may be no delay in attending to thy claim. Hast brought them with thee?" he asked, in a tone of affected indifference.

It is amazing to me now as I think of it, that one so astute should have given me so little credit for ordinary discretion, and I explain this act only by remembering that he must have been well-nigh desperate at this turn of his affairs.

I showed him not what I thought, but replied, "Thou forgettest that the Governorship of the New Kingdom of Granada was given thee as our father's heir-at-law."

This I said to try him, and immediately drew a bundle of papers from my pocket.

His eyes glistened at the sight of them, and he touched a little silver bell that was set at his elbow, as he interposed hastily, "Not so! Not so! True 'tis the talk of the ill-informed, but the truth is that I owe the nomination to the family of my wife, Doña Beatriz, who stand high with the Emperor." At mention of her name his brow clouded and, methinks, I read his thought.

"Thinkest thou," he resumed, "that aught else could solace me for the loss of that other Beatriz?"

"What of her?" I interrupted. "Where is she now?"

"I know naught of her whereabouts," he said, but I thought that he lied, for self-love is the worst enemy of truth.

At this moment the door opened and a little man dressed in black entered. With a wave of his hand Don Alonzo presented the advocate, and asked me to tell him what papers I had connected with the case. Thereupon I unfolded them one by one and read their titles and a summary of their contents, whilst both listened attentively, the little man rub-

bing his hands together constantly, and from time to time murmuring, "Very good. Very good."

Upon the conclusion of the reading, Don Alonzo consulted the advocate with a glance.

"Quite sufficient. Quite sufficient, in truth," replied the little man. "Excellent. Excellent, indeed, and complete in every respect. Quite complete and adequate for the cause."

"What, then, would you advise?" suggested the other, tentatively.

"Advise? Advise? Aha,—that is another matter,—quite another matter. To advise is the same as to become a party to the act, whereas, just so,—in very truth. Aha,—ha, ha! This is a delicate matter. One would not wish to appear to—— Just so. In very truth!" and the little man pursed his lips, put his finger tips together and cocked his head meditatively on one side, examining me slyly the while from the corner of his eye. "Advise! Advise!" he repeated, presently, after a moment of apparent reflection, "what else than that the gentleman leave the papers with me, all amongst friends, quite in the family in truth," and he glanced furtively at me again out of the angle of his eye to see if I should be verdant enough to consent to this counsel; but, evidently, he saw that which did not encourage him to maintain this position, for he hurriedly went on, "but, of course, the worthy gentleman would prefer to attend to the matter himself,—to employ his own advocate, as it were. Quite so! Very good,—perfectly natural,—perfectly natural, indeed. I should advise, therefore, that the gentleman select his own advocate at once, and bring the matter to an issue immediately. Understanding, of course, that every-

thing possible will be done by his Excellency, Don Alonzo, to facilitate matters," here he consulted his principal with a glance, and Alonzo murmuring, "Of course. Of course. Without doubt," dismissed him with a wave of the hand, and the little man bowed and shuffled himself backwards out of the room, letting the curtains fall in the doorway not quite quickly enough to conceal two figures that stood there waiting.

I seemed not to see them, but shoved the papers into the breast of my doublet and spoke quickly, lest any momentary appearance of abstraction should give my gentle brother knowledge that I was warned.

"Alonzo," I said, firmly, "my case is straight as the word of a de Lugo should be. Our late father saw to that, and meant that the blow should fall most surely. Yet for the sake of his name, I have determined to spare thee. Tell me where is Beatriz, and engage not to disturb me or mine, from this day forth, and no other eye than mine shall ever look upon these papers. My patrimony and my birthright I resign, not for thee, but for him who sinned and suffered."

"Have I not told thee that I know naught of her?" he cried, in hot anger, and then, with a sudden burst of fury, "Thinkest thou that I shall let thee find happiness with her whom I love to-day better than myself,—and that is great love, I assure thee? Better in very truth than mine own soul, which I have imperilled, and will imperil, to have her. Thinkest thou that I shall leave thee go now that thou art in my power for the last time,—thou who hast so often escaped me? Thinkest thou that thou wilt ever leave this room alive to laugh at Alonzo de Lugo, and to sire the children of the only woman he ever loved? Not by the Saints or devils that protect

me! He who loveth most, forgetteth hardest. Thou art a worthy warrior, no doubt, but one against a dozen is too great odds, I take it," and with this he touched the bell again, and there stood four in the doorway, and four stepped from behind the tapestry on one side, and four on the other, all in linked mail, and with drawn swords in their right hands and daggers in their left.

I heard a voice from without say, "Quite right. Quite right. Even so,—to be sure. In perfectly correct and legal form," and heard the little man's subdued chuckle, but he did not appear.

Instead they all fell upon me ere I could draw, even had I been minded to do so, and trussed me like a capon, so that I could not move hand or foot.

"Thou art good at tying knots, Alonzo," I said, with what indifference I could muster, "but Fortune doth not favour thee in making them stick."

"True!" he exclaimed, laughing comfortably, as though pleased with his recollections, "but this time I shall not give Fortune a hand in the game. Alive thou shalt never leave this room. Aye, in very truth, here thou shalt lie, trussed as thou art, until the odour of thy dead body shall constrain my servants to remove thee. Meanwhile I shall have thy company only for a time. Set him there!" he commanded, pointing to a corner of the cabinet, "and begone!"

"Thou dost well and wisely," he resumed, "not to be noisy, else wouldst thou masticate this bit of wood, and add to thy discomforts," and he showed me a wooden wedge which he had had prepared for the purpose of forcing between my teeth, "whereas

now we may converse at our ease, that is at mine ease, for thine is not to be considered. In truth, I marvel to see thy courage, yet ought not, for no de Lugo is a coward. Herein is a fresh proof of thy lineage," and he laughed long and loud with wicked cheerfulness.

"Thou child of Satan," I said, with a smile, "thou shalt marvel yet more at other things. Were I more at ease I could play with thee awhile yet, but I like not these bonds overly well. Hence I must set thee at once to smiling in another fashion. Take the papers from the breast of my doublet and have a look at them. Thinkest thou that an old monkey will climb by a rotten branch, and that all are sheep to be shorn who have on woolen coats?"

Uneasy at my smiling self-possession, Alonzo made haste to follow my suggestion, and, after first assuring himself that I could neither bite nor strike him, he stooped over me and pulled the papers out and spread them on his writing table.

In a moment I saw his look of confidence change to one of fury, and with one bound he was upon me and would have done me violence, but I cried, "Hold! Wouldst thou destroy thyself? Touch but a hair of my head, and thou shalt have the originals of these copies when least desired!"

"Fool! Fool that I am!" he murmured, as he fell back in his chair like one smitten with sudden calamity, "why did I not make sure of the papers first? I have played and lost. What wilt thou have?"

"Loose me that we may talk at ease! I forgive thee the wrong, because of another's sin and thine own despair, and also because thou art of the same

blood with me, and with her whom thou wouldst also destroy."

Don Alonzo hesitated an instant, and then drew a dagger from his belt and cut my bonds. Aching in every limb, I stood upon my feet and, having stretched myself with much discomfort, dropped into the chair in which I had first been seated.

"The papers thou shalt never have! They are on deposit where no hand but mine shall come at them, but let me not appear ere the sun cometh to the zenith on the morrow, and they would be produced in such a way as not to be suppressed. A certified copy is also on file with a high official of the Empire and will be produced in the event of my death within ten years: these papers cannot be recalled even by myself, ere the term expire. Hence, gentle brother, it behooves thee to carefully guard and cherish me, lest I perish ere my time. Should I die, the estate goeth not to thee, who art a bastard, but to the Lady Beatriz, heir-at-law. Now tell me where she is and let us separate! I bear thee no malice for thy hospitality which, indeed, was expected."

"Twice have I said that I know naught of her, and again I repeat it. Since she fled from Spain to avoid me, I have had no word from her, save that she is returned, but where she abideth, I know not."

"Then if thou knowest not, I cannot force from thee the knowledge that I seek. Be assured that if I learn that thou hast lied, there will be a day of reckoning. Remember also that thy fame and fortune depend upon my life and, in this contract, I include the life and comfort of our cousin. Touch but a hair of her or hers, or me and mine, and I shall give thee over to the mercies of the courts-of-

law! Good-even,—sweet relative! Prithee conduct me to the door!”

“Thy pardon,” he replied, in a choked and broken voice, “I send a substitute,” and, calling aloud, he sent a lackey that came, to show me to the door.

It may well be imagined that I heaved a sigh of relief as I passed the portal, and desired to be never thus privileged again.

For some weeks I busied myself about the affairs of Diego's estate and, during all that time, I made most diligent enquiry as to the whereabouts of Doña Beatriz, but without any success whatever. Diego's matters, however, were brought to a successful conclusion and, when he was finally established in his rights and I had made provision by his orders and charity for the widow and children of Manrique, I must needs determine what next to do.

In truth I found myself exceeding loath to depart from Spain without news of some sort from Beatriz; but, having exhausted every means at my command to obtain word of her, had finally come to the conclusion that accident or Beatriz herself alone could give me further knowledge of her, so I determined to return to New Granada by way of the Canaries, in order that I might visit the Bishop, ere I finally settled beyond the seas.

Once again I was come, therefore, to the home of my youth. All seemed as it had appeared to mine eyes of old, save that it seemed not so great and so grand as in my childhood, but of changes there had been few to attract the attention, as I made my way from the quay to the Bishop's palace, clad in very decent, although modest, attire, and with the dingy,

blood-stained, and besweated bit of riband pinned to the breast of my doublet, as I had borne it ever, through all my quest during the past few weeks.

Turning upon the threshold, I looked out upon the waters of the bay, where I had swum and fished when a lad.

Far away to the right, in the dim distance, I could see the grim towers of the Governor's castle, where I had won the right to bear my sword as a knight: below me lay the great Square of the town, where Don Pedro had reviewed the expedition ere it sailed, and before the town the shipping dotted the harbour.

I turned back again toward the house and saw the good Bishop himself, his head white with the snows of advancing years and buried griefs, his face as kind, and his eye as bright as ever. In an instant he had folded me in his arms and I knew that I was not forgotten.

"My son! My son!" he murmured, "after so many years! Do I see thee at last, and how great thou art grown!" and he stood me off to gaze at me with affectionate pride. "But come in and rest and refresh thyself after thy journey with wine and fruits of the Island, for thou must be weary of the salted fare of the ship."

With that he drew me in and had refreshment set before me, but would not let me speak until I had taken something, and then he sat and heard me as I told of the expedition and of the great Licentiate Quesada, and how he was in disfavour at Court after so many heroic deeds and the display of such unprecedented wisdom and generalship, all because of his childish vanity.

Then I told him of my friends; of our newly-

acquired estates; of Diego and Olahla and their babe; whilst he hung upon my word until I came to speak of them and of my search for Beatriz, whereat, methought, his attention wandered, and, presently, he stopped me and went out, but what manner of excuse he made I do not now remember.

Whilst I waited thus for his return and mused on all that of which I had been speaking, I heard his step again at the door, or so I thought; but, as it stopped suddenly, I turned myself about and in an instant came to my feet, crying out in sheer amaze, "Beatriz!"

Ay,—there she stood before me in doubt and indecision, whilst her lips formed my name, but spoke it not. Then she grew red and white by turns, and would surely have fled through the open door had I not sprung forward and seized her by the wrist.

"Let be! Let me go!" she cried, shrinking from me, and then recovering herself, she drew her arm gently from my grasp, and said:

"'Tis a sorry welcome I have for you. I pray you pardon me, but surprise overcame me. I am sure I am rejoiced to see you, Don Gonzálo."

"'You'! 'Don Gonzálo'!" I exclaimed, in a tone of reproach. "What is come between us, Beatriz, that thou hast left off *thouing* me? Thou mightest at least grant the *thou* to thy near kin."

"True," she said, "I had forgotten the tie of blood. Art thou lately come from the Indies? Give me news, I pray thee, of thy fortune, and tell me of the gentle and courageous maid who went with us from Tunja to Bogotá. She who had suffered so much for thee. She told me all her story, and how thou hadst been to her more than friend or brother."

"Not so, Beatriz," I replied, fancying that, though she asked, yet she shrank from an answer. "Brother I was and friend, but never more. We all loved her well for her loyalty, her modesty, and her truth."

"How is that? I thought that thou wouldst have wedded her. Where is she now?"

"Look at this frayed and soiled riband, Beatriz! This piece of silk thou canst not recognise, yet mayst perhaps recall the little golden pin which fastens it. Both of these have never left my person through all my many labours and perils, and the image of her who gave them hath been ever enshrined in my heart. Olahla is wife and mother, and happy with mine old companion and best friend. Hath this misunderstanding alone kept us apart, and caused me so much pain and grief? Ah, Beatriz, is this all that standeth between us?"

So saying, I seized her hand, but could not get her to lift her eyes to mine; so I drew her to me and, without further protest, she rested her head in contented contrition on the bit of dingy riband, and thus the Bishop found us as he smilingly poked his head in at the door.

We three spent the evening together, and our conversation was of Olahla.

EPILOGUE

THERE is but little more to tell. Only a word of how Quesada was finally made a Marshal of the New Kingdom of Granada, and made his triumphal entry into Santa Fé de Bogotá: how he wasted his fortune in vain endeavours to recover the wealth of the Dorado: how he finally came to live upon his allotted lands, not far from us, and where we often sat together at his humble home in Mariquita and talked of the great expedition and of our standing and misunderstanding on that eventful march.

What a lofty soul was that, to be so easily deceived and thus do injustice to his most loyal retainers! Yet I forgave him all of this, long years before he died. His avarice was redeemed by his prodigality; his ambition by his gratitude, and his hastiness by a sincere and hearty repentance.

He died in the year 1567, of that loathsome and awful disease, leprosy. Over his tomb, by his own request, were written the words:

"Expecto resurrectionem mortuorum."

Who more than he will welcome a new body, after the corruption of the old?

Don Alonzo came to govern the New Kingdom, and trouble came with him, and remained as long as he remained. At last he left, and trouble followed him, and was visited upon his head; for the Governor of Havana, Juanes Davilla, sent him in irons to Spain, where he was finally released and, after some

years, the King made him Captain General of an expedition to Corsica, where he was successful. Thence he passed to Milan, joining himself to the Imperial forces, and dying honourably at last from most honourable wounds. 'Tis said the Devil doth mend his ways when he is old!

Finally,—fortune was mine, and now Beatriz was found,—what more could I desire,—for I had always endeavoured not to draw more sour juices than sweet uses from adversity. Our home was in the New World, and there I write this chronicle in the hale vigour of riper years.

Diego is our neighbour, and those two who had been with us, companions in arms, sat at our firesides and laboured with us until age broke them.

The good Bishop, on dying, left many blessed memories, and to me a considerable fortune, which I did not need, but which, please God, will bear dividing, along with my other goods and chattels: for, in the words of the Warrior King and Sweet Singer of Israel,—“As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man: so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.”

Happy am I,—yes, happy are we,—and so farewell.

THE END

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